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# THE SCHOOL FOR DICTATORS



*By the same author*

FONTAMARA  
BREAD AND WINE

# THE SCHOOL FOR DICTATORS

*by*

IGNAZIO SILONE

*Translated from the Italian by*

GWENDA DAVID

*and*

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*How little wisdom rules the world*

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## PERSONAL

I WAS born on May 1st, 1900, at Pescina, a small but ancient town on the banks of the reclaimed Lake of Fucino. (Cardinal Mazarin, Richelieu's successor, was born in 1602 in a house very near my own.)

When I was three months old Pescina was partly destroyed by a flood. When I was fifteen it was entirely destroyed by an earthquake. Before the earthquake it had eight thousand inhabitants. Only three thousand remain to-day.

In my boyhood Pescina had a bishop, twenty priests, thirty *carabinieri*, a convent, and ten lawyers and notaries. It still has eight churches. Most of the inhabitants are poor peasants.

My father was a small landowner, my mother a weaver. I had six brothers, all of whom are dead. They all succumbed to illness or other misfortunes. The last was killed in prison by the Fascists. I attended junior school at Pescina. On rainy days there were barely enough benches to go round, but on sunny days the classrooms were nearly empty, most of the pupils being engaged in hunting birds or frogs. I also attended senior school at Pescina, as a candidate for the clergy, and remained there up to the earthquake. I completed my schooling in Catholic institutions in various towns in Italy. There were two reasons why I never attended a university. In the first place I was advised not to do so by the doctors, who gave me very few years to live; and in the second place political work left me very little free time. In 1917 I joined the Peasant League of Pescina and became secretary of the Federation of Land Workers of the Abruzzi. In the same year opposition to the War caused me to join a group of young Socialists, and I was appointed Secretary of the Socialist Youth of Rome. A year later I became editor of

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the weekly *Avanguardia*, which represented the extreme Left of the anti-war movement. In 1922 I was editor of a Trieste newspaper, *Il Lavoratore*, which was three times raided by the Fascists, who were accompanied and protected by the police. The offices and printing works were completely wrecked. After the March to Rome I was forced to leave Italy, to which, however, I returned in 1925. I remained there until 1928, engaged in illegal work against the Fascist régime as a militant Communist.

I have spent a number of brief periods in prison, both in Italy and in Spain under the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. During the War I was tried on a charge of instigating a peasant anti-war revolt. In 1928 I was denounced (in absence) to the Fascist Special Tribunal for clandestine political activity in Italy.

I left the Communist Party in 1930 and since then I have been living in Switzerland, where I wrote *Fontamara*, *Fascismus*, *Bread and Wine*, and *The School for Dictators*.

IGNAZIO SILONE

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FIRST DAY

THE GAME AND THE RULES





## DIALOGUE I

### THE AUTHOR'S FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH MR. W., THE FUTURE DICTATOR OF AMERICA, AND PROFESSOR PICKUP, HIS SECRET ADVISER

AMONG the strangest experiences of my life in Zurich was my encounter with two Americans who were just completing a political tour of Europe. They expressed a desire to meet me, and I called on them one morning at their hotel.

I was shown up to their room, where an elderly gentleman received me, introducing himself as Professor Pickup. He spelled the name out carefully for my benefit. 'Yes, I am the well-known Professor Pickup,' he assured me. 'I need say no more, since you will certainly have read my books. No modest disclaimers, please. As an educated person you will certainly have read my books. You will therefore be aware that my system is called Neo-Sociology, in which I synthesize and supersede all previous theories about society and man.'

Professor Pickup wore black, like a priest. His voice, too, was that of a preacher, and even in private conversation he addressed one with a solemnity worthy of the pulpit; however, his abundant head of straw-coloured hair and the way he showed his fine set of cheesy-green teeth gave him the impressive but harmless appearance of a vegetarian lion. He embarked on an eloquent disquisition upon the fundamental and irrefutable principles of Neo-Sociology ('Man is man and society is society'), in the course of which I became aware that someone else was in the room. A man was lathering his face at the wash-stand in the corner. He had taken no notice whatever of my arrival, but after some time he turned and interrupted the professor's flow.

'Listen,' he said, in a very friendly fashion. 'You really ought to have a gramophone record made of that speech of

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yours, professor. Then you wouldn't have to waste so much saliva on it, repeating it three times a day to every new person you meet.'

The reference to saliva was no mere figure of speech. It betrayed the nature of the light but persistent spray that had been exuding from Professor Pickup's mouth and was covering me from head to foot. In other circumstances I might have taken it for dew. I discreetly increased the distance between the professor and myself.

The professor ignored the interruption and proceeded remorselessly with his speech.

'The problem of a radical reorganization of the state and of the social order faces America too,' he said. 'It is my opinion, and that of all those who accept the principles of Neo-Sociology, that the state is the state and can be nothing but the state. Unfortunately there has recently been a setback in the growth and development of the movement which will culminate in the March to Washington and the seizure of the White House. We therefore resolved to make a tour of Europe for the purpose of political study. Dictatorial governments have been a feature of your Continent from the earliest times, and there are a number of first class specimens to be observed at the present day. Hence our visit to Europe. Who are these much-talked of dictators, how did they arise, how did they consolidate themselves and, above all, what have we to learn from their experiences? Such are the problems which we determined to unravel. In the course of our travels we did not fail to visit the spots sanctified and hallowed by the great men of the past. For example we paid our respects to the Rubicon, where Caesar and his trusty legionaries started their March to Rome.'

At this point the man with the soapy face made a sarcastic interruption.

'The Rubicon?' he said. 'That filthy little trickle? We went to it in a broken-down old taxi, through a lot of dusty fields,

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and afterwards all we had to get over it was some stinking fish for lunch in a tavern that was full of flies.'

'Caesar, before crossing the Rubicon, exclaimed: "The die is cast!"' the professor replied with dignity, but his friend made an ironic grimace through his mask of soap.

'I should like to have seen your Caesar and his legionaries trying to wade the Mississippi,' he said.

The professor ignored this remark.

'In Paris, as you will readily imagine,' he continued, 'we spent a long time in meditation before the tomb of Napoleon in the Invalides. At Munich a stormtrooper took us to every beer-garden having the remotest connection with the birth of National-Socialism; in other words we visited innumerable beer-gardens.'

'Thus mounting to the true, the original source of National-Socialism — beer,' the other interjected, starting to shave. 'We visited at least thirty beer-gardens. In the end we could hardly stand up. We went back to our hotel in a cab, full of the Aryan spirit.'

'At Milan,' the professor continued, 'we visited the Piazza San Sepolcro, which, as is well known, was the cradle of Fascism.'

'A cradle in a sepulchre,' his friend remarked. 'It sounds like the title of a macabre novel.'

Professor Pickup continued undismayed, as though unaware of these irreverent interruptions.

'In the course of our travels,' he said, 'we made the acquaintance of one hundred and forty-seven university professors and three hundred and six doctors. Here is the list, you can check it for yourself. We visited two hundred and forty newspaper offices and attended no fewer than ninety-two banquets. Do look through the list, it will interest you. We are taking back to America twelve cases of books on the history of dictatorships, ancient and modern, besides a case of genuine and extremely rare and valuable relics of civil wars. For example, you, as an Italian, will be interested to hear that a collector sold us the

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pants worn by the King of Italy on the day of the March to Rome. I admit they are not very long, but they are picturesque.'

Meanwhile the professor's friend had finished shaving. He was now washing his face, puffing like a walrus.

'Who is this gentleman?' I asked the professor.

'Dear me!' he replied in a whisper. 'Do you mean to say you didn't recognize him?' He whispered into my ear a name very well known in American politics.

'You mean the man whom many consider to be "the man of tomorrow"? The future dictator of the United States?' I exclaimed.

'Exactly,' the professor replied. 'He is travelling incognito, in order to have greater liberty of movement and to avoid inconveniences and complications. I therefore appeal to you to use the greatest discretion. Please do not repeat his real name to anybody. He is known on his travels as Mr. W. I am his secret adviser. Between ourselves, it was I who discovered and launched him.'

Mr. W., having completed his toilet, came over and joined us. If I had not been told who he was I should have seen nothing to distinguish him from any other American tourist. He was tall, strong and simple-looking. A deep scar on his left cheek made his face slightly unsymmetrical. The rings round his eyes and his somewhat distracted appearance suggested a sufferer from insomnia. The only thing about him that gave any hint of an unusual personality was the slightly contemptuous set of his lips.

'I hope you are in a better mood this morning after your night's rest,' Professor Pickup said to him with a smile which was sour but was intended to be conciliatory.

'I am not in a better mood,' Mr. W. replied. 'That is all I shall say now. In this gentleman's presence I shall say no more.'

'You don't seem very satisfied with the results of your European tour,' I observed to Mr. W.

'My European tour has been extremely boring and tiresome,'

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he replied. 'Its only practical result will be that when I get home there will be one more man on federal relief in the United States. I refer to my friend Professor Pickup here, whom I am going to fire.'

'This is not the first and certainly will not be the last time he has threatened me like this,' the professor said. 'My only fault is that I am too cultured for him.'

'That's perfectly true,' said Mr. W., turning to me. 'My friend Professor Pickup is very cultured indeed. He knows everything that is in all the books that have ever been written. Unfortunately he doesn't know anything else. In other words he doesn't really know anything at all.'

'Travelling and European cooking have got on his nerves,' the professor calmly explained. 'Travelling together like this for weeks on end is undoubtedly a severe test for a spiritual friendship such as ours. I wonder how many of the famous friendships of the past, from that of Castor and Pollux to that of Marx and Engels, to say nothing of St. Francis and St. Clara, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza or Punin and Baburin, would have survived such an ordeal. Not many, I think.'

'It's not just a question of being tired out physically by so much travelling,' said Mr. W. 'It isn't just that you can't help loathing a person who is always with you, every minute of the day, in trains, restaurants, cafés, hotels; what infuriates me is that the whole thing has been a pure waste of time. The whole idea of our journey was absurd. It's absurd to suppose there's such a thing as a technique for becoming a dictator, or that there's any sense in trying to study it in countries where it has been applied, in the hope of being able to apply it at home.'

Professor Pickup made what he evidently expected would be a crushing retort.

'I feel compelled to point out to you, in all friendship, that if you go on like this you will end by casting doubts on the very foundations of Neo-Sociology,' he said.

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'*Me ne frego*,' Mr. W. very unexpectedly replied in Italian.

'Where on earth did you learn that expression?' I asked him.

'I know it's rather crude, but at any rate it's straightforward and direct,' he replied. 'I learned it in the chapel dedicated to the Fascist martyrs in Milan. It was sewn into the pennants of the 1919 *squadristi*.'

I pointed out that Mr. W. had at any rate learned something in the course of his travels in Italy.

This remark delighted Professor Pickup. He suggested that I should arbitrate on the point at issue between him and his friend, but Mr. W. would not hear of it.

'I do not accept arbitration on matters in which I am personally concerned,' he said.

I remarked that from what Mr. W. had said I tended to agree with him rather than with the professor.

'That settles it, then,' Mr. W. exclaimed. 'Did you hear what he said?'

'What do you mean?' said the professor. 'It doesn't settle anything. You've only just refused the idea of arbitration.'

'Since this gentleman agrees with me, I accept his arbitration,' said Mr. W. 'The argument is now settled, and that's that.'

'But this gentleman doesn't even know what we have been arguing about,' the professor complained. 'Even if he had only the most meagre education, with even the most superficial smattering of scientific knowledge, he could not help agreeing with me; and if it is true, as he said as soon as he entered the room, that he has pondered long and deeply about my books, how could he possibly help agreeing with me? The truth is the truth, and can be nothing but the truth.'

'Very well, then,' said Mr. W. 'Let us go downstairs and have breakfast in the garden. We can explain what it's all about while we're having breakfast. Then at any rate we shan't be completely wasting our time.'

## DIALOGUE II

### ON THE SCIENCE AND ART OF POLITICS, AND WHETHER IT IS POSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH RULES FOR CAPTURING THE STATE POWER

'My dear inventor of Neo-Sociology,' Mr. W. said to his compatriot, 'the time has come for you to speak up. And here is the mustard. But I warn you that if you either talk too much or eat too much you will have to go away and sit by yourself, with nothing to eat and no one to talk to.'

The professor solemnly cleared his throat.

'All those who have hitherto devoted themselves to the study of human society,' he began, 'have tried to discover some unique or fundamental law to explain the rise and fall of the various forms of government. Plato, Aristotle, Polybius, Machiavelli, Vico, Kant, Gobineau, Marx, Pareto, Spengler, to mention only the most famous, have each in turn produced a theory of historical development. It has been explained by the natural decay of peoples and institutions, by the rise and fall of *élites*, by the virtues and vices of individual leaders, by the political and economic class-struggle, by the innate qualities of peoples and their missions, and by many other things as well. It is no more possible for political thinkers than it is for scientists to refrain from classifying data in order to discover the rhythm underlying them and reveal the laws inherent in them. Now Neo-Sociology ...'

'That's enough,' said Mr. W. 'Now pass the mustard to our Italian friend and let him say something.'

'When one talks of political laws,' I said, 'one should not have any excessive confidence in their scientific character. Allow me to remind you, my dear professor, of that excellent



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maxim of the Leviathan, *autoritas non veritas facit legem*. Every political theory in turn has been elaborated to explain, justify or defend a definite organization of society, and has only been abandoned and modified after the social organization in question has changed. There is no such thing as a logical thread running through all the theories of the men you have just mentioned, giving evidence of consistent advance in political speculation. Nobody would dare to suggest that Spengler, for example, represented an advance on Plato and Aristotle twenty-four centuries earlier.'

'It is easy to score cheap points by making absurd comparisons,' the professor replied. 'I do not understand in what sense you can talk of political science if you regard it merely as an apologia for things done. You, as an Italian, will certainly have read Machiavelli, and that makes your point of view all the stranger; because Machiavelli, as you will remember, though he set out to discover the laws underlying past events, did so in order to lay down rules for future guidance, thus showing that political science is capable of anticipating and moulding the future.'

'Machiavelli's place in political history does not depend on the practical rules that he laid down,' I replied, 'but on his having done for politics what Giotto before him did for art and what Leonardo, his contemporary, did for science. That is to say, he threw off the shackles of medieval, ecclesiastical restrictions. Machiavelli struck another blow at the theocratic unity of medieval thought; he vindicated the human against the ecclesiastical, freed political thought from the trammels of priestly supervision, withdrew it from the realm of metaphysics, humanized it. . . .'

'Humanized it, indeed! You are playing with words,' the professor interrupted. 'Machiavelli will remain in history as the theorist of political immorality, as the advocate of the doctrine that the end justifies the means.'

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'That, my dear professor, is a simplification which we shall leave to the foolish and the lazy-minded. To Machiavelli politics were not immoral, but pre-moral or a-moral. For him politics were a purely human, practical concern. He humanized political thought in the sense that he brought it down to earth from the theological clouds in which it had been soaring for centuries. He demonstrated its purely terrestrial foundations. He showed that politics were a purely human, historical product, the result of the energy, the virtues, the weaknesses, the vices of men. In short, he made a great contribution towards convincing men that it is this world in which they are at home. He broadened the conception of human liberty, that is, of human responsibility, that is of human morality.'

'You have been piling sophistry on sophistry, and it would be easy for me to refute you,' the professor replied. 'For the time being it will suffice to go back to our starting-point. You have ended by granting to Machiavelli the man what you are unwilling to grant political science as a science.'

'If I had not placed Machiavelli against the background of his time, it is true that I should have been inconsistent,' I replied. 'The point I wish to make is that the society in which Machiavelli lived was in practice already emancipated from theological control. Politics were already 'Machiavellian', and he perceived it. That was the brilliance of his achievement. He expressed his discovery with the greatest possible clarity, and made men conscious and aware of a situation already in existence. But he did not go beyond his time. For example, in his consideration of the conflict between the exceptional man's apparently unbounded freedom of will and the blind fortune that limited him, he reproduced the conflict between naturalism and individualism which dominated the thought of the Renaissance. That is no longer a question which keeps anybody awake at night.'

'To be perfectly candid, I have always had reservations

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about Machiavelli,' Professor Pickup admitted. 'His contribution to political science seems to me to have been much exaggerated. The mark he made in history was the consequence of his excessive materialism and pessimism.'

'Even the least materialistic theories have been intimately bound up with existing situations,' I replied. 'What, for example, has been the fate of the concept of sovereignty, from the time when Jean Bodin formulated it in the seventeenth century until to-day? It has merely been progressively adapted to the different forms of sovereignty that have succeeded one another in the course of three centuries. *Autoritas non veritas facit legem*. Each time authority has changed political theory has changed with it.'

'None is so deaf as he who will not hear,' exclaimed the professor. 'Please answer these questions. How do changes of political authority occur? Is history concerned with human phenomena or blind, geological events?'

'Human phenomena?'

'Are these human phenomena the result of a conscious process or of blind instinct?'

'The process is conscious, but often falsely conscious, and in any case insufficiently conscious,' I replied. 'Men who take part in a revolution or a war, or whatever it may be, naturally try to explain what it is all about. But to posterity their explanation invariably appears, if not entirely false, at any rate partial and therefore inadequate. If you examine what the leaders of the Reformation, of the French Revolution, of the Holy Alliance thought of their own movements you will see that they were by no means aware of their full motivation or of the full implications of their actions. ✓ Consciousness does not keep step with historical development; sometimes it precedes it, more often it follows it.' In the words of Hegel, it is like the midnight bird sacred to Minerva, that waits until the end of the day before beginning its flight.'

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'Are you not confusing history and politics?' the professor asked me. 'Certainly no one can anticipate the historical judgment that will be passed on the events of the present day. How will Bolshevism and Fascism be judged in three hundred years' time? It is safe to say that the judgment that history will pass on Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini will be very different from what they imagine.'

'Humanity has always had too much pity on its crucifiers,' I replied. 'Forgive them, humanity has said, for they know not what they do.'

At this point Mr. W., who had been silent for a long time, intervened in the debate.

'Both of you are entirely beside the point,' he said. 'You think you are talking politics, but you are doing nothing of the sort. Politics are concerned with the acquisition of power and with nothing else. All other considerations are either fatal or irrelevant.'

'Knowledge is power,' the professor announced. 'If it is not humanly possible for the politician to know everything, he must at least try to find out as much as he can. Knowledge is the key to success.'

'The key to success or the key to ruin,' I added. 'You are doubtless aware of the fate of Oedipus, who wanted to know too much. He was a king. In his place a good politician would have been content to have gone on levying taxes on his subjects and giving daughters to his Jocasta. But wanting to know too much was his ruin. Some thinkers, applying the recent discoveries of psychology to the modern dictators, have envisaged them as new Oedipuses. Fortunately for them they do not know it. The Providence of the ancients always had a weakness for tyrants. Should one not regard this as a merciful precaution on its part? If knowledge did not follow but preceded human events, whence would men derive the will to act? Is not a certain ignorance of the laws that govern human society at the

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very basis of all politics? Millions of men, both leaders and led, have given their lives believing they were establishing the reign of the Goddess of Reason or fighting the War to End War, or even the last struggle against social inequalities. Was not a certain ignorance an essential postulate for all that?"

"I must say I like your praise of ignorance," said Mr. W. "A man I know was deceived by his wife for thirty years. But he would never allow anyone to mention the subject, which he found extremely distasteful. "Knowledge is suffering", he said."

"I do not deny the importance of mystery for the social order," Professor Pickup admitted. "Nor do I deny that the science of politics, like all other sciences, is groping in the dark, and that its laws are still rudimentary. But a politician has no other compass. He must know those laws and follow them. To aspire to power without having carefully studied political science — or at least without taking the advice of someone who has studied it — is like trying to become an artist without having studied painting."

"We have come back to where we started from," I remarked. "But I do not think the digression has been idle. As for what you have just said, my dear professor, it seems to me that you confuse the science of politics with the art of politics, or at least that you assume too great a connection between the art of politics, i.e. the practical actions of the living politician and the science of politics, i.e. the observations and conclusions of historians on the political events of the past. It seems to me that the example you quoted proves the very opposite of your case. It is the task of the science of aesthetics to analyse works of art and to speculate about the nature of art, but the conclusions arrived at by aestheticians as a result of the examination of existing masterpieces are not sufficient to create new masterpieces, which are only really such if they are original creations, not copies and imitations of works already in existence. There is always something unprecedented about every profound

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political change. Even if it uses existent materials and offers formal analogies with events of the past, it is always the new answer to the new needs of a new situation. Every major historical event offers new material to political science and leads to the formulation of new political theories or throws a fresh light on previous theories, just as new masterpieces enrich the science of aesthetics. In short, real life always precedes and nourishes speculation.'

'I appeal to you to stop talking in this abstract fashion,' said Mr. W. 'When I claim that the American Revolution was a masterpiece because, unlike the French Revolution, it was not heralded by a lot of philosophers, economists and other windbags, I am trying to say the same thing as you. The American Revolution was simply the American Revolution. No attempt was made to revive the Roman Republic and ape its customs.'

I pointed out that in Switzerland, too, liberty had always been a vital necessity rather than a philosophical abstraction, and that the Swiss had always talked of concrete liberties, in the plural, rather than of abstract liberty in the singular. In Switzerland political ideologies had always been introduced from abroad.

'In 1776,' Professor Pickup announced, 'Benjamin Franklin went to France on a diplomatic mission. Do you suppose he learned nothing in France? You ought to be the Benjamin Franklin of the present day, Mr. W. Do you suppose you have nothing to learn?'

'I the Benjamin Franklin of the present day?'

Mr. W. burst into loud and prolonged peals of laughter that echoed round the hotel garden and the neighbouring wood like the joyous whinnying of a horse.

Professor Pickup, however, had the patient tenacity of a prophet in the desert.

'Very well then,' he went on, 'let us leave aside the scientific aspect of politics, since neither of you are interested in it. Let

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us confine ourselves to the art of politics, the practice of politics, since that pleases you better. Have you never wondered why all over the world at the present day governments seem so ephemeral and the influence of the various political parties so temporary and uncertain that no one can be confident what the constitution of any particular country will be in ten years' time? The real and primary cause of this is that the politicians of to-day are ignorant of the true art of politics. Their outlook is entirely external and superficial. The profession of politics to-day is overloaded with amateurs. Every man who is a failure in any other profession believes himself capable of success in politics. Every day you hear people who would not dare to discuss algebra or chemistry unless they had studied those subjects laying down the law about politics, which they have never studied. In former times the initiation into the true art of politics was long and arduous, and a rigorous selection was applied to those who aspired to the practice of politics. Tacitus in his *Annals*, discussing the politics of Tiberius, speaks of *arcana imperii*, the secrets of power. Was not the stability of certain monarchies based on those secrets? Politics has its secrets or mysteries, like every other profession, mysteries into which one can only be initiated by competent persons. When men still had time to reflect, before they were deafened by the noise of machinery and stupefied by the cinema and the Press, that is between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, Europe produced a whole literature on *arcana reipublicae*, the mysteries of statesmanship, reserved for those who were to collaborate with princes in the art of government. Even then, no doubt, there were aspects of politics and political institutions which were not secret, and were contemplated and admired by the common people from afar, but these were described in the *arcana* as nothing but *simulacra*, i.e. polite fictions under cover of which the mysteries of the real but sacred art of politics could be celebrated. Now Neo-Sociology . . .

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'That will do, thank you,' said Mr. W. 'The mysterious rules that may have been valid in past ages are not of the slightest interest to me, and I do not care in the least whether it is true or not that the stability of past regimes depended on their application. What interests me is whether in the times you speak of there were such things as trusts and holding companies, and whether there were millions of unemployed, and strikes, and newspapers with million circulations, and whether the radio existed.'

'No,' Professor Pickup admitted. 'None of those things existed then, not even the radio. But I must point out that Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt did not exist then either.'

'Then what's the use of those famous secrets to me in America to-day?' Mr. W. inquired with some heat. 'I've no taste for Masonic rites, nor for the Ku-Klux-Klan. My movement is entirely modern and up-to-date in every respect, and has no need of mysteries.'

'In other words it's now clear beyond all possible doubt that just because of your obstinate, short-sighted empiricism all my efforts to endow your movement with an inspiring and fruitful ideal are doomed to failure,' said the professor. 'What was the cause of the defeat of Tammany Hall? Why were poor Huey Long and Bill Thompson of Chicago political failures? Because they lacked bold political ideas. When I brought you to Europe, I hoped that your mind would become susceptible to bolder visions. I believed that when I took you away from the atmosphere of Jersey City and the society of Frank Hague, and showed you Rome and Berlin, broader horizons would open before you. But here we are at the end of our journey, and I cannot tell you how grieved and disappointed I am at the results.'

'It was I that was the fool to come with you,' said Mr. W. 'Only someone completely wrapped up in the impenetrable mysteries of history would try and persuade me that the road



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from Jersey City to the White House runs through Rome and Berlin. I know a shorter way.'

'I warn you not to underestimate the value of mysteries,' I said to Mr. W. 'If you ever achieve power you will appreciate all their value. But what am I saying? Long before you achieve power, as your movement grows, gains support and makes compromises, your organization will double itself. It will have a public façade, or *simulacrum*, to attract the crowds, and a dark chamber for the celebration of mysteries. The literature of which Professor Pickup has just spoken, in which the practice of politics was dealt with as a secret science, flourished in times of absolutism, when, because of the frequent conflicts between the lay and the ecclesiastical authorities, and also because of the decay of theology itself, it was neither useful nor expedient to base the doctrine of sovereignty on divine sanction. Those who sought a theoretical justification for the exercise of power were caught between Scylla and Charybdis. Both divine and popular sanctions being inexpedient, it was necessary to surround the state power with mystery. Gustav Freytag, a German writer of the end of last century, wrote a charming satire on the mysteries to which Professor Pickup referred, parodying a manual on the art of government entitled *Idolum Principum*, published in 1666. In Freytag's satire a young man considered eligible for the position of royal counsellor is admitted to the secret apartments where the *arcana status* are jealously preserved — the mantles of state, the masks of state, the powder for the eyes, and so on. The mantles of state surrounded those who wore them with an aura of due authority and reverence. The names of these mantles were *salus populi*, or the defence of the realm, *bonum publicum*, or public welfare, or *conservatio religionis* or the preservation of religion, according to whether they were used for imposing new taxes on the people or exiling opponents and confiscating their property under the invariably effective pretext of being propagators of heretical

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doctrine. One mantle, completely worn out by everyday use, was called *intentio*, the mantle of good intentions, because it served to justify everything. With the spectacles of state entry was made into the realm of pure illusion, because they enabled one to see things that did not exist and not to see things that did exist, at the same time magnifying trifles out of all proportion and reducing the dimensions of grave events beyond all recognition. It is easy to laugh at these things now, but at heart, even in the most democratic regimes of the present day, the art of high politics is still regarded as the privileged secret of a chosen few. Were there not democrats, and even Socialists, who considered Mussolini and Hitler worthy of praise and congratulation when they came into power, just because their origins were humble and their experience of statesmanship was nil? We live in an age when biologists deny the hereditary nature of most, if not all diseases, but these people still talk as though there was such a thing as a hereditary capacity for rulership. Nevertheless, as soon as these uncultured upstarts were in power, they proceeded to entrench themselves without timidity or hesitation, and used their power with determination and skill. But not being able to fulfil their promises, they proceeded to set up miraculous *simulacra*, or tokens, giving the masses the illusion of possessing what they did not possess. Finally, lacking any religious sanction for their power and being free from any genuine popular control, they draped the true levers of their political machine with heavy veils, disguising, concealing and sanctifying them just as the *arcana status* of absolutism were sanctified, and transporting them beyond the realm of discussion. Such are the new *arcana dictatorem*.'

At this point Mr. W. interrupted me. 'What you say is true, though you put it quite wrongly,' he said. 'It seems to me that we have been sitting here long enough. I therefore suggest that we go for a walk in the wood.'



### DIALOGUE III

#### ON THE POLITICAL SENSE, AND ITS VITAL IMPORTANCE FOR THE EMPIRICAL POLITICIAN AND THE ADVENTURER

WE walked for some distance along the road winding up the wooded hill-side and then, to avoid the increasing traffic, took a narrow, shady path among the firs and pines. Professor Pickup walked in front. He wore his overcoat, and his neck was well wrapped up in a woollen scarf for fear of catching cold. Mr. W. walked behind him, in his shirt-sleeves, and I brought up the rear. I could not help wondering at the freedom with which these two strangers talked to me, as well as at my own unusual compliance. I could find no motive for the latter but curiosity. The professor strode ahead, carrying his head high and taking no notice whatever of the thorns and briars that stuck to his coat and the branches that grazed his shaggy mane. He reminded me of a lion on the point of roaring. Perhaps because of the time of the day and the poetical season of the year, to my great surprise he suddenly stopped and started solemnly reciting the first verses of the *Divina Commedia*, with eloquent gesticulations; then, turning to Mr. W., he said in a voice in which reproach was tinged with emotion:

‘And I hoped to be your guide, just as Virgil was Dante’s guide in the regions of the underworld, and Livy Machiavelli’s through the labyrinthine politics of Florence.’

On hearing this barely civilized barbarian daring to quote Dante and comparing this gentle wooded hill with the *selva selvaggia ed aspra e forte* of the first canto of the *Inferno*, I nearly turned and fled. But the broken-hearted affection in the professor’s voice made me suddenly feel sorry for him, and I remained. Mr. W., however, made no response to the professor’s outburst. He merely laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

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'Other times, other ditties,' he said.

'Times change, but not men,' the professor replied, obstinately trying to renew a discussion that had ended in a manner unsatisfactory for him. 'Machiavelli wrote well of the immutability of human nature. "The world has always been inhabited by men who have had the same passions," he said. Modern psychology may have increased our knowledge of the spiritual structure of man, giving us a far more complicated picture of it than Machiavelli ever imagined, but it has not been able to show that human nature has changed in the course of centuries. The fundamental instincts of man have remained the same. Did you not yourself recall the persistence of the tragedy of Oedipus in modern man?'

'That is so, Professor,' I replied. 'But allow me to point out that politics is not, other than indirectly, concerned with the internal life of man. In spite of the persistence of the same human passions, history records many political changes. That is because of the ever-changing social, economic and moral conditions in which man has been situated. It is the object of political science to study those conditions.'

'*Plus ça change plus c'est la même chose,*' the professor observed. 'There is nothing new under the sun. All the changes which we have seen in our own lifetime have happened before and will happen again, because the passions by which men are driven are always the same. Hence the importance of historical examples. *Historia magistra vitae*, history is the master of life. That is why Machiavelli looked to Titus Livius for the precepts by which the future of his own country should be guided, and derived his theory of the state from a precise study of the laws that regulated the Roman Empire. What is the difference between the military *pronunciamentos* of Sulla and Caesar and those of General Franco?'

'So far as the individual psychology of those military gentlemen is concerned, there is probably very little difference,' I

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answered. 'But that is a problem for the psychologists. Nor would it be difficult to find curious analogies between the pathetic and harmless eloquence of a Cicero, and that of many democrats of modern times. The real difference between the political conditions in which Sulla and Caesar successfully carried out their conspiracies and the conditions that confronted General Franco on July 19th, 1936, is one of twenty centuries. Is there any need to recall that the difficulties which faced Sulla when he landed at Brindisi and Caesar after crossing the Rubicon were exclusively military? They had nothing to fear from the people they met along their route. But in July 1936, General Franco's *coup d'état* was frustrated not by military opposition or even by the so-called Republican Government, but by the direct action of the revolutionary workers. Were there any revolutionary workers in the time of Livy?

'No,' the professor agreed. 'There could be no revolutionary workers because there was no such thing as industry.'

'Nor was there such a thing as a Non-Intervention Committee,' Mr. W. remarked. 'The Non-Intervention Committee which, as we know, has prevented the Germans, the Italians and the Russians from intervening in the Spanish Civil War. There could not be such a thing as a Non-Intervention Committee because Christianity did not yet exist. There are certain refinements which mere pagans would not have understood.'

'I do not understand,' the Professor exclaimed, 'how a writer — for such appears to be the profession of our Italian friend — can persist so obstinately in denying the social function of the intellectual class. What are we to do on this earth I should like to know, if we are to renounce our role as guides?'

'Guides to whom and for what?' I replied. 'It is my belief that intelligence and education are only useful to him who tries in good faith to discover the truth. He who aims at success at all costs needs quite different qualities.'

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'What qualities?' Mr. W. inquired.

'The by-products of intelligence,' I replied. 'Cunning, acumen, adroitness, a flair for men and circumstances, and above all, unscrupulousness — but real intelligence, no!'

'Here we are back again at Machiavelli,' the professor exclaimed, with a gesture of despair. 'We are in a vicious circle. But since we have come back to Machiavelli, permit me at least to observe that he was equipped with true and clear intelligence, and not with what you call its by-products.'

'I agree with you about Machiavelli,' I replied. 'But I do not believe that a single statesman has ever achieved a position of power as a result of reading Machiavelli. If a politician is naïve, credulous, timid, slow of understanding, he will certainly not possess the qualities which are required to read *The Prince* or any other book. A choice incident that happened to Machiavelli himself well illustrates the abyss that lies between theory and practice. When Machiavelli was a guest of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, the famous *condottiere*, at Milan, the latter asked him to demonstrate the latest military manoeuvres he had recommended in a recent treatise, and put an entire body of infantry at his disposal for the purpose. For two whole hours Machiavelli ordered three thousand soldiers about according to the directions he had so well and so clearly given in his book, but the result was nothing but confusion. The boiling sun caused great discomfort to the spectators and dinner-time came and went, and in the end Giovanni delle Bande Nere lost patience. "I will extricate you from your difficulties and we shall go and dine," he said, and asked Machiavelli to retire, whereupon he gave a few orders and with the help of the drummers produced order out of chaos in a few moments, amid universal admiration.'

'*Se non è vero, è ben trovato*,' the professor observed. 'Allow me in turn to quote examples that prove the very opposite. To take the most obvious, Mussolini has told us that when he

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was a boy his father read him *The Prince* every Saturday night.'

'Our knowledge of Mussolini's father makes it certain that the last thing he was capable of on Saturday nights was reading anything to anybody. Mussolini's only object in encouraging such legends is to create an impression. He uses medieval uniforms and rides on horseback for the same purpose. It is Mussolini's great good fortune that throughout his life he has read and still reads nothing but newspapers. However, as a talented journalist, he is able to talk and write arrogantly about all the things that he knows nothing whatever about. As an example of his impudence in intellectual matters, let me quote a revealing detail from his official biography by Signora Sarfatti. After reading Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, the first book of a philosophical nature that he ever laid hands on (it was much read by anarchist workers before the war and went into several popular editions), he immediately proposed writing a history of world philosophy. He thought he knew enough about it already.'

'I was not aware of those details,' the professor replied. 'Hence I am not in a position to pass judgment upon them. But you will be aware of what Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*.

' "World history became for me an ever more inexhaustible source of understanding of the historical action of the present, and hence of politics . . . World history provides a practical guide to political action to-day. He who is incapable of learning its lessons should have no illusions about his own capacity for leadership. He is nothing but a shallow boob, though often a presumptuous one, and all the good will in the world will not excuse his practical incapacity." '

'According to the biographers,' I replied, 'Hitler's favourite reading, particularly in his boyhood, was two bound volumes of an illustrated magazine dealing with the Franco-Prussian



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War. In later years he continued to learn his history mainly from coloured illustrations, as is abundantly proved by *Mein Kampf*, which you quoted yourself. A deep knowledge of history makes fanaticism impossible.'

At this point Mr. W. intervened.

'You are still dallying about the fringes of the subject, and both of you are beginning to bore me,' he said. 'A dictator does not read the history of other dictators. He is not an on-looker, he makes history himself.'

The conversation dropped and we went on walking in silence.

Half an hour later, when we wanted to turn back, Professor Pickup, who had been leading the way, discovered that he was lost.

'Since you insisted on leading the way, you must find the way back,' Mr. W. said with considerable venom.

'I'm a stranger here and I haven't a map,' the professor replied.

'We haven't walked very far, and all that is needed is a little sense of direction,' Mr. W. replied.

'A sense of direction has never been my strong point.'

'And you want to be a political guide?' Mr. W. replied with a laugh. 'Don't you know that politics is an ever-changing landscape, to which there are no such things as reliable maps? All the maps, plans and guides that may have been published are false or out of date. In politics one has to advance, retreat, stop, turn to the left or to the right according to the constantly changing vista that lies ahead. Sometimes it looks as if a gigantic mountain is blocking the way, and then one fine day it disappears and all that remains in its place is a quivering mouse.'

'Mr. W.,' I said, coming to the professor's aid, 'you talk as if you can't see the wood for the trees. If you could manage to forget for one moment what is immediately in front of your nose, if you could only take a broader view, you would find it

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impossible to deny that the economic, social and spiritual structure of America is not a thing that changes every day.'

'Truc,' said Professor Pickup. 'The permanence of that structure constitutes the personality of our country. It is only thanks to those unchanging features of the American scene,' according to Neo-Sociology, that America is America and can be nothing but America.'

'Possibly I can't see the wood for the trees,' Mr. W. confessed. 'But a man who wants timber goes straight to the trees and doesn't bother about the wood. A good hunter is interested in game, not in zoology.'

'Allow me to congratulate you,' I said. 'You have just shown me that you possess one of the typical characteristics of the future Fascist dictator. I should like to express with greater clarity an idea I hinted at a short time ago. It is this. The knowledge necessary to a politician varies according to the position that he chooses in his country's internal struggles. He may choose to be on the side of liberty and reform. He will then require, if he is to be a leader, a clear intellect, a serious culture, a profound knowledge of history, of social needs and of the psychology of the people. But the intellectual baggage of the future Fascist leader need be incomparably lighter. Any real culture would only be an embarrassment to him. It would create scruples, doubts, uncertainties in his mind at every step, and it would be doubtful if power would ever fall within his grasp; or if it did he would lose it with speed and ignominy. Of course a certain amount of knowledge is useful to a Fascist leader. But this he picks up as he goes along, according to the problems he comes up against.'

'What you say is true, though you are comparing incomparables,' said Mr. W., interrupting me. 'Why do you confuse religion and politics? Why do you confuse the antiquated, sentimental, pathetic, chaotic politics of the nineteenth century with the new politics of the present day? You must not forget

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that democracy and Socialism are both survivals from the nineteenth century. True Fascism, as I understand it, is modern politics, pure and simple. There is only one criterion for a Fascist leader, and that is success. If he fails there is no excuse for him whatever.'

'If the Fascist politician,' I continued, 'has no need of any true cultural preparation, which would only handicap him in the frantic chase after success, he must possess a very highly developed political sense. That is the characteristic of every born politician.

'“The public man is born a public man”, Mussolini has said very rightly, “It is a question of stigmata he bears with him from birth. Public men, like intelligent men or subnormal men, are born. No apprenticeship can make a public man of one intended by nature for domesticity”.'

'Democracy gave wings to a lot of chickens,' Mr. W. observed.

'Political sense is a disposition of the mind,' I went on, 'like mathematical sense or musical sense. A strong political sense may easily give the Fascist leader an advantage over his opponents, particularly in times of crisis. Mussolini was far from being the most cultivated or politically the most experienced statesman in post-war Italy. He had no clearly formulated ultimate objectives, he contradicted himself often, he had repeatedly to change the direction of his movement in radical fashion. But he is gifted with an exceptional political sense. He has revealed an extraordinary flair for exploiting circumstances favourable to him, and he has nearly always correctly estimated the character of the men with whom he has had to deal. He has shown consummate ability in foreseeing his opponents' moves while concealing his own and deceiving others about them. Napoleon was almost entirely ignorant of European history, and for that reason it was easy for him to turn it inside out. Metternich said of him that he became a

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great strategist and a great legislator "by means of sheer instinct". Engels said the same of the Iron Chancellor.

"Bismarck is a man of great practical sense, of great skill — he wrote — a born, an accomplished man of affairs . . . But very often an intelligence so developed in the domain of practical life goes hand-in-hand with a corresponding narrowness of vision . . . Bismarck never showed even the trace of an original political idea. But he assimilated the ideas of others. His narrowness was his good fortune. Without it he would never have looked at universal history from a purely Prussian standpoint."

"To return to our times, I advise you to read Souvarine's admirable life of Stalin. You will be surprised at the disparity between Stalin's will and his intelligence, between his knowledge and his flair. Souvarine describes him as

"patient, meticulous, as sober of illusions as of words, and strong, above all, in his contempt for the individual, and in his lack of principles and scruples. He is the product of circumstance, and owes his political fortune to his opponents. He would never have succeeded in imposing himself without a certain flair, without a natural capacity for intrigue and an effective combination of cool-headedness and energy. Skilful in postponing disadvantageous decisions, in dividing his enemies and in turning obstacles, he shrinks from nothing when the opportunity arrives for acting quickly, for striking and crushing."

'All great politicians have been opportunists of genius. The real qualities that favour a politician's career are revealed in the internal struggles of his own party even more than in struggles with other parties. Even if men with superior qualities sometimes prevail, their victory is never unaccompanied by the employment of the lowest methods. Those who are not able to reconcile themselves to these end by being defeated by rivals within their own party.'

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'You can't swim without getting wet,' Mr. W. remarked. 'Otherwise you will only be drowned, and that isn't the best way of keeping dry.'

'If political sense is the decisive requirement in the political struggle, how do you explain the setting up of political schools for the formation of new leaders in Berlin and in Rome?' the professor asked.

'In spite of the pompous name they are not schools for political leaders but schools for obedient underlings,' Mr. W. explained. 'Their purpose is to train youths in docility and devotion. Their object is not to train new Hitlers and Mussolinis, but to prevent new Hitlers and Mussolinis from arising. That is, of course, a very wise precaution from the Ducc's and the Führer's point of view.'

'In a speech delivered to the Italian Parliament in June 1924,' the professor said, 'Mussolini admitted that the masters whom he admired were the Bolsheviks in power in Russia, and he said that Fascism must follow the Bolshevik example and exterminate its opponents. Sure enough, three or four days later he had the Socialist Matteotti "eliminated". In Goebbels's book *Vom Kaiserhof zur Reichskanzlei* there is frequent mention of discussions and exchanges of experience between Nazi leaders and emissaries of Mussolini. After the assassination of Dollfuss in Vienna a deputation consisting of high officials of the Italian police taught the timorous leaders of the Austrian Fatherland Front not only the police methods but the political methods required to struggle against the Nazi opposition.'

'Those examples could be multiplied,' I observed. 'If there were such a thing as a comparative history of the various post-war dictatorships, it would contain many examples of such *rapprochements*, and many of the *arcana dictaturum* of which we spoke earlier this morning would be revealed. It would also be easy to find analogies with the dictatorships of the past, of course bearing the differences in environment in mind.'

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'Let us leave aside the question whether the old laws of politics are still valid in modern historical conditions. Is there, however, a specifically Fascist art of government?' the professor asked.

'That is the question,' said Mr. W.

'While we were in Rome,' the professor continued, 'we met a Fascist writer whose pseudonym is an anagram of Napoleon's surname. He claimed that the problem of the conquest and the defence of the state power is not a political but a technical problem, that the circumstances favourable to a *coup d'état* are not necessarily of a political or social nature and do not depend on the general situation in the country. He has developed this idea in a book of which he gave us a copy. It is actually dedicated to the technique of the *coup d'état*.'

'There certainly is a Fascist art of government,' I replied. 'But it is not an arbitrary creation of Mussolini's mind but the result of definite historical conditions. To consider politics as mere technique was permissible during the Renaissance. Now it is only a silly anachronism. The men of the Renaissance analysed and criticized political events as though they were pure works of art. The great artists of the Renaissance were themselves more concerned with technical than with aesthetic problems, and if their works still have power to move us it is because they were great artists in spite of their theories and their preoccupation with technique. But to consider politics as purely a matter of technique, as was done in the time of the Renaissance, is to assume that human beings are pliable and submissive raw material which the statesman can mould to his will, like the sculptor his clay and the carpenter his wood. A writer who dared try to pass off as his own a theory as old as that, and attempted to explain the victories of Lenin and Mussolini by it, could only get away with it if he succeeded in proving that the Bolshevik Revolution and the March to Rome could have taken place in 1914.'

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'In Paris,' the professor remarked, 'we met Paul Valéry, the poet. He said that "all politics tend to treat men as things".'

'In a certain sense that is true,' I replied. 'The truth is that every political doctrine is a simplification of reality, a pattern. But the politician who does not day by day adapt his programme to living reality is not a politician but an abstract poet. We had a curious example of that in the case of D'Annunzio's seizure of Fiume, which lasted a year, i.e. a long time, thanks to the peculiar international situation. The Regency of Carnaro was not a political event but a work of art—a "D'Annunzian" work of art, an empty rhetorical creation; behind which, however, there were concealed the fangs of the Italian general staff. Another curious example of an intellectual who looked at politics from a purely technical standpoint, such as would have been scarcely legitimate even in the case of a Renaissance artist, was provided by the Frenchman, Georges Sorel, who at the end of his life praised Lenin and Mussolini at the expense of "the reactionary amateur revolutionaries" whom he treated with the greatest contempt. Traces of the same spirit are also perceptible in Bernard Shaw. Generally, however, when you meet people who share this viewpoint, admiring Stalin and Mussolini for the "impeccable" manner in which they "eliminate" opposition and criticizing Goering for certain mistakes made in staging the Reichstag Fire, it is a question neither of men of the Renaissance nor of men of the twentieth century, but it is simply because they are fools. In short, a purely technical analysis of actions committed by men is always false, because man is not pure technique.'

'How do you explain the fact that artists and eminent writers fall into such an error?' the professor asked.

'A first explanation may be found in the actual social position of artists and writers, which remains much what it was in the time of the Renaissance. An exclusively humanistic culture, moreover, does not help intellectuals very much in recognizing

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the true forces behind historical events, and leads them to attribute excessive importance to formal problems. But the example of Georges Sorel also shows that a genuine knowledge of social reality does not suffice if it is not supported by a strong moral sense.'

'Do you believe that moral sense is more alive to-day than it was during the Renaissance?' the professor inquired. 'It is a proposition that has been maintained.'

'I do not mean that it is moral sense that prevents the moderns from regarding politics as pure technique and the people as merely clay, because contempt for the masses and a tendency to try to use them as though they were a mere passive instrument still prevail among the majority of politicians to-day, and persist, according to my experience, even among many so-called revolutionaries. But that theory, which was false even in the time of Machiavelli, though without it much of the *History of Florence* would be incomprehensible, is even less tenable to-day. That is one of the reasons why in a whole series of countries that have been profoundly shaken by crises and menaced by the so-called Communist peril the traditional statesmen, though in less troubled times they had gained the reputation of expert practitioners of the art of politics, were unable to save the state. When things came to extremes their technique availed them nothing, because a state is not guided as a ship is steered, the people, unlike waves, not being subject to simple natural laws. But the task for which the great engineers of politics turned out to be inadequate proved to be the making of certain embittered plebeians, who took advantage of the intrinsic weakness of the revolutionary movement and were extremely sensitive to every change of feeling among the masses of which they were a part. It is, however, also true that as soon as power was in their hands they were forced to crush the natural desire of their own followers to see them fulfil their promises. In practice their rule is characterized by the complete



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independence of the executive, which becomes the sole motive force of the state, manipulating plebiscites and dispensing judicial convictions and acquittals. To the extent that modern dictatorships succeed in reducing their subjects to passivity and in freeing themselves from the control of the party that put them in power, subjecting the latter to the executive, they resemble mechanisms rather than organisms; and it is then that one can begin to talk of a technique of that mechanism. The first consequence is a rapid degeneration of social life.'

'Does there not also exist a technique of liberty?' the professor asked.

'Technique aims at the mechanical use of men, while liberty considers the human personality as sacred. A technique of the progressive stupefaction of the masses exists. A technique of liberty does not and cannot exist.'

'For heaven's sake, stop there,' Mr. W. implored. 'Lord knows we have had a hard enough struggle to reach that conclusion. Let us abstain from all moral judgments. Does there then exist a technique of dictatorship?'

'So it seems.'

'When I decided to undertake this extremely boring journey,' Mr. W. continued, 'I was induced to do so because I felt curious to find out whether there was such a thing as a technique of dictatorship. We agree that the primary requisite of the aspiring dictator is political sense. Now a sense can be sharpened, polished, refined, but this journey has taught me nothing whatever. The people we met treated us like primitive barbarians and talked to us as though we were the audience at a public banquet. The books they gave us are by the most naive apologists.'

'It has been known for a long time that if you want to find out the truth about something you must see what its opponents have to say about it,' I pointed out. 'If you're interested in capitalism, you must read the Socialists. If you're interested in

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Catholicism, see what the Protestants have to say about it, or if you're interested in the police, read the anarchists on the subject, and vice versa.'

At this point Mr. W. made a proposal that I felt had been in the air for some time. He asked me to give him a course of lectures on the post-War European dictatorships.

'A kind of rapid course on *arcana dictorum*,' he explained.

'I am not in the least jealous,' Professor Pickup assured me, with his usual greenish smile.

I felt bound to refuse, however, without thinking myself obliged to give any reason. But Mr. W. was so insistent that I finally agreed to ask a friend to take my place.

'He is an extraordinary person,' I explained. 'He is a tireless controversialist and unshakeable in his convictions, though his completely unprejudiced outlook sometimes makes him a highly inconvenient partisan to his political friends. His many bitter experiences and the cool analysis to which he has subjected them have freed him from party dogmas, without, however, quenching the inner urge which led him as a youth towards the workers. This, however, is only known to his friends, while others, who hear him arguing and criticizing, cannot understand why he still remains a Socialist.'

'Who is he and what is his name?' the professor asked.

'I cannot tell you his real name, which is known only to very few,' I replied. 'The truth is that he has been compelled to use so many names that he will end by forgetting his own. Expelled as he has been from one country after another, he has now become accustomed to living incognito, like you when you go abroad, Mr. W., although for different reasons. Many know him by the name of Thomas, and, since he abhors euphemism and is in the discouraging habit of calling even unpleasant things by their right name, he has been dubbed Thomas the Cynic. His philistine acquaintances thought to discredit and cast a slur on him by this nickname, but he

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surprised them by accepting it with relish. The word "cynic" is derived from the Greek κύων, a dog, and he therefore accepted it as a most apt reference to the dog's life he had hitherto led. Then, recalling the famous sect of the Cynics, founded by the Greek Antisthenes after the death of Socrates, he decided that it was a far more appropriate and exact description of his political position than the vague, current term of "anti-Fascist". Four hundred years before the birth of Christ the Cynics were what the respectable Press of to-day would call irreligious and disloyal. Following the teaching of Socrates, they preferred ethics and the practice of virtue to the cult of the gods, and they called no man stranger. I know that Thomas the Cynic has recently been studying the technique of mystification, and he would have liked to have given a course of lectures on the art of deceiving mankind in the *Volkshochschule* here, had his position as a refugee not made it impossible.'

'Does he believe that men should be deceived?' the professor asked.

'He believes in calling things by their right names,' I replied. 'As for the art of deceiving, he is preparing a handbook on the subject, convinced as he is that the deceivers have nothing to learn from it, while the deceived have.'

'Do you think he will consent to talk to us?' Mr. W. asked.

'He will probably be attracted by the novelty of the situation,' I replied. 'He is very fond of arguing and of being contradicted. For this reason he has always preferred reading the papers and books of his opponents to those of his own friends. When he has no one to argue with he has been seen arguing with himself.'

Meanwhile we had arrived in sight of the hotel at which the two Americans were staying, and, after the usual exchange of courtesies, we parted.

SECOND DAY

THE DICTATOR'S VOCATION



## DIALOGUE IV

### ON SOME CHARACTERISTIC MARKS OF THE FUTURE DICTATOR

THOMAS THE CYNIC Gentlemen, after searching for you everywhere I naturally find you in the bar. Please don't let me disturb you. Introductions would be superfluous. There is no need for second sight to tell which of you is Professor Pickup and which is Mr. W.

MR. W. Thank you for the compliment. Won't you take a seat? Don't bother about that hat. Just sit on it. It's only the professor's. What can I offer you?

THOMAS THE CYNIC If it's not too much to ask, a glass of water, please.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Won't you allow us to offer you something a little more nourishing? If you don't mind my saying so, one can see that you could do with a good meal. We have all known hunger in our time.

THOMAS THE CYNIC A Pythagorean maxim bids us remain sober and critical, for that is the path to wisdom.

PROFESSOR PICKUP You talk in a bar like a guest at a Platonic love-feast.

MR. W. Mr. Cynic, I understand you live in Zurich as a political refugee. That cannot be an easy or simple life.

THOMAS THE CYNIC The absence of simplicity and ease has always distinguished the life of man from that of domestic animals, pigs, chickens, sheep, parrots and journalists in Fascist countries.

PROFESSOR PICKUP You are a political refugee. In other words you are a defeated man. Having failed to achieve political success in your own country, how is it that you presume to set up as a teacher in political matters?

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THOMAS THE CYNIC I did not accept Mr. W.'s invitation to come here in the capacity of a teacher. On the contrary, I came here in the hope of learning something. I am, however, surprised to hear Professor Pickup hinting that there is any kind of incompatibility between the status of an exile and the profession of political science.

PROFESSOR PICKUP and MR. W. What do you mean?

THOMAS THE CYNIC Machiavelli was driven from Florence in 1512 after the re-entry of the Medici. In the following year he was implicated in the conspiracy of Pietro Paolo Boscoli and imprisoned for three months. When he came out of prison he fled to San Casciano and there, far from the scene of political activity, after all the disappointments and discomfitures he had suffered, sat down and wrote *The Prince*. Some decades later the Frenchman Jean Bodin, who introduced the concept of sovereignty into the history of political thought, hardly fared better as a practical politician. He was in the service of the Duc d'Alençon, compromised himself with the sect of the *politiques*, who were opposed to the Wars of Religion, earned the enmity of Henri III and wrote his treatise on the Republic in defeat and solitude. The Dutchman Grotius was sentenced to life imprisonment and died in exile for sharing in the Arminian heresy, and it was in exile that he wrote his *De jure belli ac pacis*, which became one of the pillars of the science of international law; and about the same time the Englishman Hobbes chose to leave his country rather than remain in it while a political revolution which he hated was taking place; and in his voluntary exile he wrote *De cive* and *The Leviathan*. Later Montesquieu certainly had an easier time. He was a member of the Académie Française and president of the Parliament of Bordeaux. But he wrote *L'Esprit des Lois*, on the separation of the legislative, executive and judicial functions, in the quiet of La Brède, where he sought refuge on returning from a journey to England in which he had learned at first hand what

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political liberty was. These four are of fundamental importance in the history of political thought, and I have omitted the names of many other famous political thinkers whose thought matured remote from practical political life. As for the moderns, it will be sufficient to mention the exiles Marx, Mazzini, Lenin, Trotsky, Masaryk; but particularly the first, who in our time, with other means and other intentions, fulfilled a function similar to that of Machiavelli in the sixteenth century, in so far as he set out scientifically to lay bare the concrete functioning of society, shaking off the trammels of idealist German philosophy and French humanitarianism; for which reason the philosopher Benedetto Croce has acutely called him the Machiavelli of the proletariat.

MR. W. Mr. Cynic, do you wish us to conclude that the best way of knowing how to achieve power is to be a long way away from it?

THOMAS THE CYNIC Mr. W., if, as in this case, after hearing me enumerate a number of consistent facts you invariably find me chary of deducing a general law from them, do not believe that it is from timidity or cowardice. I am satisfied with having proved to the professor here that political science owes its progress neither to the great ones of this earth nor to their hangers-on, but to men who suffered defeat in practical politics. To a certain extent political science is their revenge, inasmuch as it permits them to raise themselves above the immediate historical moment, to take a long view of historical developments and to perceive and anticipate their end. The function of the scribes and apologists of triumphant regimes has always been to hide their contradictions, weaknesses and impermanence, often succeeding, of course, in doing effective propaganda work, but at the expense of truth, which is the sole nourishment of science.

MR. W. Now I can see how I can make a great political thinker of Professor Pickup. When I come into power my first act of government will be to send him into exile.



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PROFESSOR PICKUP I know better than ever to take what you say seriously.

MR. W. Mr. Cynic, don't let Professor Pickup give you a too discouraging idea of the American academic world. Although he had an excellent dinner, he is now engaged in making a clean sweep of all the chips and olives in the bar. The explanation, however, is simple. He has been eating with particular zest ever since I told him that I am going to fire him as soon as we get back to America. Then he will be in for lean times, and it is intelligible that he should be piling up reserves.

PROFESSOR PICKUP The syncopated music from the next room offers me the opportunity of a well-merited retort. May I remind you, my dear Mr. W., of the times when you were a saxophonist in a San Francisco saloon? And do you remember the very inglorious reasons why you were given the sack?

THOMAS THE CYNIC He was a saxophonist in a saloon?

PROFESSOR PICKUP He actually composed several tangos and fox-trots of a mediocrity and bad taste sufficient to melt the hearts of all the dishwashers and truck-drivers who frequented the place. In the opinion of several doctors, his musical compositions revealed evident symptoms of asthma.

THOMAS THE CYNIC What you say, my dear professor, is entirely in Mr. W.'s favour. It is one more proof that he has the stuff of a dictator in him.

MR. W. and PROFESSOR PICKUP What do you mean?

THOMAS THE CYNIC Artistic ambitions, the desire for self-expression by means of literature, painting, music or some other medium are constantly recurring themes in the biographies of nearly all the great dictators. Artistic failure, due to defective training or lack of taste, has been one of the biggest crosses they have had to bear. After achieving power some of them have sought an easy revenge, imposing the duty of admiring their works upon their unfortunate subjects. Thus it is recorded that Dionysius the Tyrant composed such ridiculous tragedies that

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the poet Philoxenus was unable to keep a straight face while listening to them, though he knew what dire penalties awaited him for the crime of laughing. This same Dionysius bought the steel pen with which Aeschylus wrote his tragedies, thinking it would enable him to write as well as Aeschylus, but the result was even more laughable.

PROFESSOR PICKUP So that if Mr. W. imposes one of his fox-trots as the national anthem of the United States when he becomes dictator, he will be faithful to historical tradition.

THOMAS THE CYNIC It is hardly worth recalling Nero and his fiddle; or the fact that Napoleon, when he was a young officer, ignorant of his future, wasted time writing a *Dialogue on Love* and some *Reflections on the state of nature* in a very emphatic style, a feeble imitation of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*; or that Louis Napoleon, before becoming Napoleon III, wrote some *Poetical Reveries*. What we know of contemporary dictators is even more instructive. Konrad Heiden relates that Hitler wanted to become an artist. At the age of eighteen he twice presented himself for the entrance examination of the Vienna Academy, and on both occasions failed in drawing. This check depressed him beyond all measure, and he did not have the courage to tell his mother about it, nor did he mention it in later years in his autobiography, in which he mentions many trivial details. In other words his failure to achieve his artistic ambitions, which would have enabled him to raise himself one step above the modest social environment from which he sprang, left a wound which rankled for a long time; it is not, perhaps, entirely unconnected with the crusade against modern art he undertook thirty years later when he came into power. Mussolini tried literature in his youth. No doubt he too did so in order to raise himself in the social scale, just as when he was an elementary schoolmaster he had visiting cards printed with 'Benito Mussolini, professor' on them. His novels and plays, though absolutely devoid of any artistic content whatsoever,

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bear witness to an overwhelming impulse to give vent to the turbid fantasies that haunted his diseased imagination. No literary critic has yet taken the trouble to attempt an aesthetic evaluation of the Duce's plays and novels, and no one considers them as belonging to the history of Italian literature. Rather do they belong to that doubtful class of literature which even booksellers do not admit to their shelves, and examples of which are only to be found on stalls and barrows in the streets. But though Mussolini's writings have no aesthetic value, they have psychological value, for they reveal the mind of Mussolini as a young man. His masterpiece, so to speak, is an anti-clerical, pornographic novel entitled *Claudia Particella or the Cardinal's Mistress*, which the Fascist Margherita Sarfatti describes as a 'clumsy hash without head or tail, a flashy film of long footage, a cheap serial story of the most terrible kind'. This phrase actually flatters the book. In the same spirit as *The Cardinal's Mistress* Mussolini wrote another novel entitled *The Lamp without a Light*; a story entitled *Vocation*, the principal character of which is a nun tormented by her senses on Christmas night, a play entitled *Gentlemen, the Curtain Rises*, the action of which takes place among hooligans in the most squalid quarters of a town, and another play the action of which takes place in a lunatic asylum. Clumsy though they are, the material of all these compositions is always the same; they are made up of criminal passions, sadistic pictures of infirmities and weaknesses, the violation of their vows by priests and nuns. The style recalls the emphatic prose of a provincial journalist. This did not prevent Mussolini from becoming a dictator in the land of Dante and Petrarch. The circumstances that favoured him were obviously of a social and political and not an aesthetic order, but it is extremely significant that they led to a man with the psychology of the author of *Claudia Particella* becoming the leader of the Fascist movement. Mr. W.'s future biographers will ask themselves this question. If our dictator,

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they will say, had had a big success as a saxophonist or as a composer of tangos and fox-trots, would he ever have thought of organizing the March to Washington?

PROFESSOR PICKUP Neo-Sociology . . .

MR. W. If you say another word, I'll throw you out of the bar.

PROFESSOR PICKUP You will give this Italian gentleman a very curious impression of American manners. I therefore feel it my duty to point out that, though you talk a great deal about Americanism, in reality you are not a real American at all and your origins are very obscure.

MR. W. What do you mean by a real American?

THOMAS THE CYNIC Gentlemen, I appeal to you not to tear each other's hair out for a matter that does not merit it. Do you, my dear professor, believe that a dictator or political leader must be a native of the country he proposes to rule?

PROFESSOR PICKUP Certainly; particularly a nationalist leader.

THOMAS THE CYNIC I am sorry, my dear professor, to disagree with you once more. If Mr. W. is not a pure American I regard it as yet another qualification for the leadership of an American nationalist movement. No doubt you are aware that Hitler, the model dictator of our time, was born at Braunau, in Austria, and a few years before becoming Chancellor of the Reich was in danger of being expelled from Germany as an undesirable alien. Stalin, as you know, is not a Russian but a Georgian. Another contemporary dictator, Mustafa Kemal, was born at Salonika. It is not known for certain whether he is an Albanian or a Macedonian, but that did not prevent him from becoming the dictator of Turkey. Towards the end of 1922 he, too, was in danger of being expelled from Turkey as an alien. Napoleon was a Corsican, some sort of a mixture between French and Italian, and he spoke the language of the country of which he became emperor very badly. Nor is foreign blood a speciality of heads of governments established

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by *coups d'état*, because it is still more frequent among the heads of traditional governments. The royal houses of England, Russia, Spain, Rumania, etc., had Germanic or Austrian origins. The Swedish dynasty is descended from a Frenchman, a creature of Napoleon's. The result of the marriages between the various royal houses is that none of them is devoid of foreign blood. But that does not prevent every king from being considered a pure and genuine embodiment of his country's virtues. As for Mr. W., everything depends on the result of the struggle he has undertaken. If he succeeds, his biographers will have no difficulty in proving that one of his ancestors came over in the *Mayflower*. (A pause.) I lift my glass of water and give you the toast of the Pilgrim Fathers!

PROFESSOR PICKUP The toast is America!

MR. W. The toast is me!

## DIALOGUE V

### ON THE FUTURE DICTATOR'S INADAPTABILITY TO ORDINARY LIFE

MR. W. With Mr. Cynic's permission, let us walk home with him. When one suffers from headaches and insomnia to the extent that I do, and the night is as starry and mild as it is to-night, one has no desire to go to bed.

THOMAS THE CYNIC If sharing an infirmity with great men is any consolation to you, let me remind you that in the years before they achieved power every dictator, from Julius Caesar onwards, suffered severely from headaches. This peculiarity, in which all the biographers concur, is of extreme importance, because the fact that they suffered from headaches is the only proof in the case of some dictators that they had such things as heads at all.

PROFESSOR PICKUP *Mr. Cynic, who are these young women who keep getting in our way? Some are in groups and some alone, some go this way and some go that, but every single one of them is accompanied by a dog.*

THOMAS THE CYNIC They are maids from the villas here, taking their masters' dogs for their evening walk. An evening walk seems to be one of the health rules prescribed by the vets. Thus, thanks to the just protection which dogs enjoy in good society, even poor servant girls can get some fresh air in the evening. Some time ago I happened to notice some verses hung on a kitchen wall, to the effect that a house without a baby's smile was a very sad house indeed. The poor cook's comment on this was: 'Believe me, sir, a house where there are no dogs is still worse.'

MR. W. There seem to be a number of sun-bathing establishments on this hill. During our walks to-day we saw people

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sun-bathing in bathing costumes in every gap in the woods. I must say they made a very healthy and peaceful impression, particularly because it was obvious that there was a complete lack of embarrassment between men and women; and also because of a certain moderation and naturalness very remote from the fanaticism with which Americans indulge in certain forms of health exercise.

PROFESSOR PICKUP History has known many cases of health rules being elevated into religious obligations — for example, the Catholic fast on Fridays, the forbidding of certain foods among the Jews and the Mohammedans, besides circumcision, ablutions, etc. The fact that no modern church has yet adapted as part of its own ritual ten minutes' Swedish exercises, with wireless accompaniment, every morning, shows how insensible the churches are to the deepest spiritual needs of our time. Hence the need for the totalitarian state to take the place of the churches and have a ritual of its own.

THOMAS THE CYNIC If I am not mistaken, sun-bathing is already practised as a religious rite in Zurich. I have been told that a sect — naturally a secret one — has been formed here by a number of people who talk of themselves as 'sun-redeemed'. They are mostly young men and women of good birth and strict Protestant upbringing who are engaged to be married but feel themselves prevented by an overwhelming sense of unworthiness and guilt, not personal but hereditary. They therefore postpone their marriage for seven years, during which they vow to let their bodies be purified by the sun.

MR. W. Do they practise nudism for seven whole years?

THOMAS THE CYNIC Not complete nudism, which their modesty would forbid. Besides, from their point of view it would be futile, because obviously no guilt, even hereditary guilt, is attached, for example, to the backbone or the knees. They therefore expose to the beneficent rays of the sun only those hidden and secret parts which a Father of the Church

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so imaginatively called *instrumenta peccatorum*, the instruments of sin.

PROFESSOR PICKUP You cannot imagine with what admiration the example of those young people fills me. Nothing really great and profound can be undertaken, either in private or in public life, without an adequate period of initiation and preparation.

MR. W. I hope you don't expect me to remain with my pants down in the sun for seven whole years?

PROFESSOR PICKUP I did not for one moment imagine you capable of appreciating the full import of what I said. Pythagoras imposed five years of silence and abstinence on the young men who wished to enter his school. A number of strict monastic orders, the rules of which aim at complete concentration of all the faculties upon a few eternal truths, are still in existence to-day. But their founders did no more than revive the rules of the ancient mystery religions. Initiation into the rites of Memphis and Eleusis, for example, was obligatory, not only for priests but also for kings and political leaders. This initiation required exceptional physical and moral courage. He who was considered worthy of being submitted to the preliminary tests had to descend into an underground labyrinth, make his way through fires, ford rushing torrents, cross fragile bridges over deep abysses, carrying a lamp that went out if his hand so much as trembled. If he allowed panic to overcome him for one moment he was lost. But if he passed the test satisfactorily, a long novitiate ensued. He had to undergo a lengthy period of absolute silence, a period of study and meditation on the great problems of life. Finally, when the initiate had faithfully carried out all that was required of him and might justifiably have believed that all the mysteries had now been revealed, a veiled priest approached him and whispered in his ear: 'Osiris is a black god.' In other words, an inexplicable mystery still remained. There was a sun in eclipse that could



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not be seen. Beyond Isis and Osiris there lay the mystery of mysteries.

MR. W. I should like to see what would happen nowadays if every prospective candidate for the House of Representatives had to undergo a similar ordeal. I should not dream of consenting to it myself. I should prefer almost any other occupation. I should even prefer to be a tennis coach.

PROFESSOR PICKUP In a disorganized society such as ours, in which public office goes to the most successful intriguer, it is inconceivable that politicians should ever submit to initiation ceremonies such as that which I have described. But when the not-distant day arrives when all the great countries of the world will be subject to totalitarian dictatorships, initiation ceremonies will be introduced as an essential reform. They will be an effective means of restoring an aura of divinity to the state, persuading the people to bend the knee in silence, and enveloping the apparatus of government in a thick veil of mystery. *No one will dispute the rights of the masters and no one will ever dream of going on strike.* But in the meantime, until society is reorganized in this way, those who aspire to be its artificers should submit themselves to an initiation adequate to the audacity of their own ambitions. . . .

MR. W. We've discussed that point quite enough already, and to your own disadvantage. Don't let us repeat this morning's arguments.

PROFESSOR PICKUP This morning, as well as last night in the bar, I made the mistake of trying to maintain the discussion at too intellectual a level, momentarily forgetting a fundamental principle of Neo-Sociology, which says that 'theory is theory and life is life'. Intellectualism is, of course, an only too natural deviation on the part of cultured persons such as myself. I do not mean that I believe that the cultural preparation of the future dictator is of minor importance, because nothing has been said to make me change my mind. I have always been

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particularly fascinated by those passages in the dictators' biographies describing their years of youth and preparation. One reads of the young man predestined to dictatorship passing his childhood and youth far from the noises of the madding crowd, in solitary places, desolate islands or among solitary mountain tops. If he sometimes visits the metropolis it is to pay homage to the monuments of the glorious past, and when he finds them abandoned and decaying, his holy wrath is expressed in noble invective that attracts the crowds. But the vulgar mob does not understand him, and he is considered a half-wit.

MR. W. Perhaps because the times are not yet ripe, my dear professor, I consider you a half-wit.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Do so if you like, if it helps you to excuse the wasted years of your own youth. The lack of restraint with which you talk to me in the presence of strangers authorizes me, I think, to answer you in similar fashion. You have tried five or six trades, but you are incapable of success in any one of them. You have always had a great deal of ambition, but have lacked the application that the attainment of every ambition demands. You have always been incapable of standing on your own feet, and have always needed someone else's support. But you have never succeeded in gaining real friends. You certainly don't lack natural good qualities, but so far you have never succeeded in adapting yourself to anything. What you are you owe to me. During the War . . .

MR. W. That will do!

THOMAS THE CYNIC I have no right to interfere in such a personal dispute. Indeed, embarrassment would have caused me to take my departure several minutes ago had I not overheard a number of interesting details about Mr. W.'s youth. In my opinion they prove that he is the stuff dictators are made of.

MR. W. and PROFESSOR PICKUP What do you mean?

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**THOMAS THE CYNIC** One of your last statements, my dear professor, might be taken to describe the childhood and youth of every future dictator. The future dictator never succeeds in adapting himself to anything. This is not to be explained by the purely objective difficulties — hunger, a hostile environment, family misfortunes, illnesses, etc. — which he may have to face. All these things are later recorded by the official biographers, and are offered as an excuse. But in reality these things occur in life far more frequently than is generally recognized, and many ordinary people succeed in overcoming and adapting themselves to them. But the future dictator never succeeds in adapting himself to anything. There are worse things than hunger. . . .

**MR. W.** There are many things worse than hunger.

**THOMAS THE CYNIC** The future dictator suffers from a sense of pettiness and restriction. He has a sense of boredom and depression, and every now and then a lightning intuition that something unprecedented will happen, and that he will be compensated, and more than compensated, for all his humiliations. Meanwhile, the years pass tediously and aimlessly. Friends make good, marry, advance in their careers, buy a motor-car and a house and are honoured and respected. The future dictator makes frantic efforts too, but nothing turns out right. He remains available for any enterprise of an extraordinary or desperate nature. A war, a political crisis, a period of social agitation will draw him in, together with thousands of other drifters like him, and carry him away, like a high tide that throws up the flotsam and jetsam that floats along the coast. Then a wave higher than the rest sweeps him along on its crest. He is already another man, a leader. He has no doubt about being the predestined instrument of God, and readily adapts himself to his new role.

**PROFESSOR PICKUP** There are many biographies which fail to confirm what you say.

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THOMAS THE CYNIC Legend immediately gets busy with the man who succeeds, and if one wishes to distinguish the reality from the poetry one must learn to choose between the texts. You are probably aware that the number of miracles attributed to Mohammed in his lifetime increased from century to century after his death. By the thirteenth century they had reached the magnificent total of three thousand. Mohammed's early years were humble and wretched, for he lost his father a few months before he was born and his mother while he was still a boy. But legend relates that his birth was accompanied by signs and portents, and that the prophet was revealed in his earliest cries. Many biographers treat history like the Mohammedans. But here we are, at the doorway of my house. Please come in for a few minutes. That will give me an opportunity of reading you some extracts from dictators' biographies in support of what I have said. Sit on the bed or on the floor, whichever you prefer.

PROFESSOR PICKUP In a life of Mussolini, with which he himself presented me, I read that from his earliest boyhood he heard voices, saying, 'Rome! Rome!' — prophetic allusions to the March to Rome.

THOMAS THE CYNIC He is only too willing to allow such legends to circulate, but he himself has quite different memories of his childhood. He has himself stated:

I never knew the serenity and tender sweetness of certain happy childhoods. Can you be surprised that later, in college, at school, and to a certain extent even to-day, in life, I was and am harsh and taciturn, irritable and somewhat savage? . . . However, my true story is all in those first fifteen years. Those were my true formative years. I feel what were the decisive influences. Everything was already in germ within me.

PROFESSOR PICKUP I have read that he worked for some time as a bricklayer in Zurich.

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THOMAS THE CYNIC There are Italian Socialists living here who still remember him. Mussolini's work as a bricklayer was in reality only a polite fiction. He was only actually engaged in manual labour for a very few days, and promptly gave it up, retaining a memory of intolerable physical exhaustion for the rest of his life. Those few days were, however, sufficient to earn him the title of 'ex-bricklayer'. Those who knew him here in Switzerland say that he was satisfied to live as best he could on the small pittances doled out by the Socialist groups.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Hitler relates in *Mein Kampf* that his oratorical talent was revealed to him from boyhood in the arguments he had with his schoolfellows. He says:

I became the leader of a little group, and in school learned easily and at that time very well, but otherwise I was rather difficult to handle.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Hitler's father was a shoemaker, but considered that occupation too humble, and after many struggles and privations succeeded in realizing the dearest dream of every Austrian and became an official. He would have liked his son to become an official too. But his son in turn aspired to something higher; he wanted to become an artist. Heiden relates that he lost his father at the age of fourteen and his mother at the age of nineteen. His father died regarding him as a failure.

He had failed in his examinations, and spent the last five years of his mother's life at home, tied to her apron-strings and doing nothing.

Lacking the talent to become an artist and having failed to gain an entry to the school of architecture, he was forced to become a housepainter. He had no contact with his fellow-workers.

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I drank my bottle of milk and ate my piece of bread apart, and carefully studied my new environment or brooded over my pitiful lot.

Those are his own words. Invited to join his trade union, he refused. He could not bear the idea of being an ordinary working-man, though he was one. From Germany let us take a leap to Turkey. The two countries are in very different stages of development, and are therefore to be judged very differently, but let us confine ourselves for the time being to the formation of the dictator's personality. H. C. Armstrong, in *Grey Wolf*, says that Mustafa Kemal's parents lived a 'poverty-stricken yet dignified' life. His father was a Government clerk in the Ottoman Debt Administration at Salonika.

His pay was insufficient, and often so many months in arrears that in order to keep his family and make both ends meet he was forced to supplement it by private trading in his spare time.

Later he gave up his post and started trading in timber. He died, leaving his family penniless. Mustafa

was a silent, reserved boy, weak and bony, with pale blue eyes and sandy hair. He rarely showed any affection, accepted his mother's petting as a matter of course, disobeyed her orders and fiercely resented any punishment. He was abnormally self-sufficient, rarely made friends with other children but played solemnly by himself.

Mustafa's mother retired to the country, and two years later, at the age of eleven, Mustafa went back to school in Salonika.

There he was ever in hot water. After his open, free life he kicked against the discipline. He was truculent with his masters. With the other boys he was self-opinionated and boastful, so that he became unpopular. He refused to join in their games; if they interfered with him he fought them.

Eventually he ran away from school, and his uncle sent him to the Military Cadet School, where he

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was successful but also unpopular. Inherently thin-skinned, he became touchy and ill-natured if criticized or spoken to roughly. He kept to himself, made no friends, and yet he wished to be noticed and to be pointed to as somebody out of the ordinary. None of the boys dared interfere with him, for he fought back at once. When they tried to get him to join in with them, or asked him what he was at, he became brusque: 'I don't mean to be like the rest of you,' he said. 'I mean to be somebody', and went on his way . . . He showed also a jealousy, which would grow into a spiteful dislike, of any other boy who was more successful than himself . . . He became churlish if anyone competed with him. He must be the outstanding figure or he would not be in the picture at all.

PROFESSOR PICKUP You will permit me, I hope, to quote some examples that do not bear out what you say. Pilsudski came of a prosperous landowning family belonging to the ancient Lithuanian nobility near Vilna.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Nevertheless, he spent his childhood in an atmosphere of national oppression, full of memories of the defeat of the Polish Revolution of 1863. He stated himself that from his earliest schooldays he found it intolerable to sit under Russian masters. At the age of seventeen he became a Socialist. Later he was accused of terrorist plotting and sent to Siberia . . . But can Pilsudski be considered by the same standards as the other dictators? He never tried to found a modern totalitarian state, even in the years when he could have done so.

MR. W. I happened to be in Havana during the last *coup d'état*, led by the celebrated Sergeant Fulgencio Batista. I was very surprised to learn the story of his life. It seems that at the age of seven he was placed as an apprentice with a tailor. Then he became in turn a waiter, a sleeping-car attendant, an engine driver and a day-labourer on a sugar plantation. For many years it was his dream to be a hairdresser with his

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own saloon, but this he never achieved. He did, however, possess sufficient ability to capture the power of the State of Cuba. Juan Vicente Gomez, before tyrannizing over Venezuela, was said to have been a herdsman up to the age of thirty.

PROFESSOR PICKUP My dear fellow, everybody knows that everything is possible in South America. You must not forget that in spite of your doubtful origin you are a citizen of the United States.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Let us then consider some more worthy examples. Napoleon Bonaparte did not have a rosy childhood. The difficulties his mother had to contend with to rear her numerous brood are well known. When young Napoleon was a student at Autun and Brienne he is described as having been lonely and taciturn, which is often the fate of students from the provinces. His class-mates made fun of him because of his odd appearance and because he was a Corsican. One of his teachers said of him at that time:

He will go a long way if circumstances favour him. He is capricious and proud, with a strong tendency to egoism. He speaks little, is lively in repartee, has a great deal of pride and aspires to everything.

The biographers agree that the characteristics of the young dictator before he spreads his wings are wounded pride, ambition, unscrupulousness, a readiness for intrigue to push himself ahead. Napoleon III's father was ill and eccentric, and he was educated by his mother. He was a self-centred and difficult young man. He had a great thirst for glory, spent an agitated youth and wandered in many countries in Europe and America in search of fortune. Let us cross the Channel. Young Oliver Cromwell, the future Lord Protector, is described by those who knew him as

lacking any grace, lacking in all those talents that serve to gain the sympathy of others. In the years in which he



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was a student in London he was more noted as 'one of the chief matchmakers and players of football, cudgels, or any other sport or game' than as a student. He was melancholy, nervous, timid and violent at the same time, and after finishing his studies passed through an obscure period of depression and crisis, hesitating before every project.

PROFESSOR PICKUP That reminds me of Jack Cade in Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, the dictator of a day, a former sheep-clipper, son of a butcher and a midwife, who wished it to be thought that he had illustrious forefathers. Side by side with Cade we may recall the Roman Cola di Rienzi, son of a pothouse keeper and a washerwoman, who succeeded for some time in raising the people against the barons during the time the Holy See was transferred to Avignon and had himself proclaimed tribune of the Roman people. To complete the trio we may remember Masaniello, the seventeenth-century Neapolitan, who was a hawker of fish in his boyhood, and then a hawker of vegetables. He was vicious, presumptuous, but above all ignorant, but he too came into power in the name of the people after a period of popular agitation. This seems to have appeared so extraordinary to him that a few days later he went mad. But Jack Cade, Rienzi and Masaniello are only caricatures of what I mean by dictators. Neo-Sociology . . .

MR. W. Forgive me for interrupting you. Mr. Cynic, you have said a number of things on which I wish to reflect by myself. The truth is that I do not like to speak of my own youth. It is not that I have anything to be ashamed of, but simply that I do not wish to discuss it. There is something else that I should like to ask you, though I see that it is getting late.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Allow me to accompany you back to your hotel. You would find it difficult to find the way by yourself. The streets in this city are deserted early, and you might not find anybody to show you the way. Besides, it will enable us to continue our discussion.

## DIALOGUE VI

### MANY ARE CALLED, BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN

THOMAS THE CYNIC There is a chapter in the Bible to which I should like to call your attention on the way back to your hotel. You will perhaps remember that in the Book of Judges there is a description of the Fascist *coup d'état* carried out by Abimelech, the illegitimate son of Gideon, who paid and armed gangs of beggars and ne'er-do-wells for the purpose, and with their aid killed one by one, 'upon one stone', as the Bible says, the three score and ten sons whom Gideon had by his legal wives. The story of this misdeed is immediately followed by a really illuminating parable concerning the politician's vocation. With your permission I shall refresh your memory of it. One day, the parable relates, the trees went forth to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go hither and thither, ever on the move, to be promoted over the trees? And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness and my good fruit and bustle perpetually about the streets of the world, busying myself from morning to night with politics? Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees and talk foolishness? Then said the trees unto the bramble, Come thou and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble and reduce you all to ashes.

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This extraordinary parable is rarely commented upon by the priests, and then they always misinterpret it, because it is, in my opinion, one of the most subversive in the Bible. The bramble is an utterly useless plant, and that is why it is fated to rule over the others.

PROFESSOR PICKUP The bramble of the Old Testament reminds me of the crown of thorns of the New. Do you think every crown is a crown of thorns?

MR. W. I certainly think that in comparison with the ordinary, normal man, whose interests and pleasures are manifold, your true politician can well be compared to the bramble, which is useless and sterile in comparison with the olive tree, the fig tree and the vine. In reality it belongs to a different species, a more self-centred species. Your born politician is unable to adapt himself to ordinary life, and when he eventually finds the path that leads to power, as he gradually advances along it, everything else becomes indifferent to him, and his outlook becomes more and more restricted and concentrated on that one, single ambition that is the source of all his joy and all his anguish. If there are politicians who desire power for the sake of realizing their ideals, as it is called, or for the sake of enriching themselves or acquiring women and race-horses and such things, they deserve our contempt, because such people are nothing but miserable intruders. Your true politician desires power for its own sake, and all his voluptuousness lies in the exercise of power. For him ideas, reforms, peace, war, women, horses, are merely the instruments, the incidentals, of power and not the reverse. A little while ago, while you two were arguing, I started wondering whether I was by any chance an extraordinary man. I assure you, without any false modesty, that I am not yet crazy enough to believe it, though when everybody else believes it I shall probably end by believing it myself. Were those who are now in power in Rome, Berlin, Moscow, really extraordinary men? All those who knew them

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in boyhood and youth deny it, and I have no difficulty in accepting what they say. The future dictators were not in the least extraordinary, but then they were not ordinary either. The ordinary man is a hotch-potch of desires. He likes eating, drinking, smoking, sleeping, keeping a canary, playing tennis, going to the theatre, being well-dressed, having children, stamp-collecting, doing his job, and many other things besides. That is the reason he remains a nobody; he spreads himself over so many little things. But the born politician wants nothing but power and lives for nothing but power. It is his bread, his meat, his work, his hobby, his lover, his canary, his theatre, his stamp-album, his life-sentence. The fact that all his powers and energies are concentrated upon one thing makes it easy for him to appear extraordinary in the eyes of the masses and thus become a leader, in the same way as those who really concentrate on God become saints and those who live only for money become millionaires.

THOMAS THE CYNIC That is why dictators, saints and millionaires appear inhuman to the ordinary man. If everybody lived like them the world would be a lunatic asylum. The refusal of the olive tree, the fig tree and the vine to become professional politicians in the parable well illustrates the ordinary man's repugnance and horror of such abnormality. Note that their answer is not that they do not wish to enter politics but that they cannot enter politics, because, thank heaven, their nature is to be useful and to live an ordered life and not to run hither and thither, talking foolishness, making an uproar in the market-place and giving themselves airs. You know there are many people who maintain that Hitler and Mussolini, for example, are mad, mad in the clinical sense. That is a thoroughly intelligible thing for normal, useful and decent people to believe. (Incidentally if an ordinary person looked out of the window and saw us arguing in the street at this time of night the first thing he would say to himself would

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most likely be: The poor fellows must be mad!) But if democratic politicians and Socialists hold the same opinion of the dictators it only proves that they themselves are amateurs and intruders on the political scene. The Fascist leader's superiority over his opponents consists above all in this; that he aspires to power, only to power and to nothing but power. Whether he is on the side of the capitalists or the workers, the church or the devil is a secondary matter to him. What matters to him is power. The fact that his whole life is politics gives him an incalculable advantage over his opponents, who are often good family men, sometimes even gentlemen, encumbered with 'ideas', 'principles' and 'programmes', tied to special interests, and bound to answer for their actions to congresses and committees; moreover, apart from politics, they often have other passions, such as literature or hunting or fishing or music or golf or pipe-smoking, not to speak of the passions which fill the pages of the picture papers. Politics for the Fascist leader is not a profession but a passion in the true sense of the word; an exclusive and totalitarian passion, like every true passion (the word means concentration of all the emotions on a single object, and comes from the Latin *passio*, which means suffering). As for the voluptuous satisfaction the dictators derive from the exercise of power, which largely compensates them for the lack of ordinary pleasures, one can detect it in the faces of Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin in the rare photographs of those great men in which, perhaps in a moment of absent-mindedness or in a fleeting interval between two poses, they have allowed themselves to be taken off their guard. Their expression on such occasions strikingly suggests the look of the half-drunk toper raising a glass of champagne to his lips, or the adulterous woman, blissfully tired, leaving the bedroom. The Greeks had no doubts about the voluptuous nature of tyranny. (In Plato's *Republic* Socrates asks: 'Perhaps it was because of this that even in ancient times Eros was called a tyrant?') Even the sadism of

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tyrants obviously derives from Eros. In 1914, during the riots in the Ancona district, Mussolini wrote:

We record events with a little of that legitimate joy which the artist must feel in front of his own creation.

He was then a militant Socialist, but that turn of phrase revealed the future Fascist leader. Pilsudski confesses in his war memoirs that for him

there was much poetical emotion in the first battles of the war, as in a first love affair or a first kiss.

Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is a very dismal book as a whole, but the description of the first meeting at which the stormtroopers beat up their opponents is noticeably gay.

'The crop of bloodshed sprang up marvellously',<sup>1</sup> Goering wrote in his book, *Aufbau einer Nation*, in connection with the Nazi *putsch* of 1923. There is a peasant proverb which says 'rain in April means wine in the barrel'. Stalin's character is mistrustful and retiring, but the only personal confidence of of his that I have read is as follows. He once said:

There is nothing more delightful than to arrange in detail a trap into which one's enemy will inevitably fall, and then to go to bed.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Do you believe that a passion for a thing is sufficient to enable you to get it? I know many men who live only for money, but not one of them has become a millionaire.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Many are called, but few are chosen.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Let us leave aside the multitude who are called and concern ourselves only with the small band of the chosen, of the elect. That will bring us back from psychology to politics. Who are the elect? Neo-Sociology gives a clear and indisputable answer (truth is only truth if it is indisputable). Neo-Sociology tells us that the elect are the elect. Nothing

<sup>1</sup> *Die Blutsaat ging wunderbar auf.*

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could be clearer than that. All the theological speculations of the Calvinists on the problem of predestination failed to reach a clearer conclusion. But for you, who are devoid of all meta-physical sense, that is not sufficient. You want to know what distinguishes the true leader from the false . . .

MR. W. Here we are back at the hotel. If you are not sleepy, let us go up to our room and continue the discussion there. But we shall have to talk quietly in order not to disturb the neighbours.

PROFESSOR PICKUP What distinguishes the true leader from the false? You will not mind if I too refer to my anthology of quotations. I have here my 'Breviary of Fascist Thought', containing the answers to all the political problems of our time. What does Pilsudski tell us apropos of the leader?

For ten years I sought to discover in what the essence of leadership lay; in the midst of danger, as Clausewitz says; in the midst of uncertainty, and finally, as I myself put it, in the midst of eternal and insoluble conflicts which one must cut through like a Gordian knot with the sword of decision and the sword of command.

Max Weber distinguishes three types of sovereignty (each with its appropriate type of leader): 'legal' sovereignty, 'traditional' sovereignty and 'charismatic' sovereignty. It is the third of these which is of interest to us. 'Charismatic' sovereignty, according to Weber, depends on 'an individual's extraordinary sanctity or heroism or typicalness, or the things done or put forward by him'. The mere presence of a 'charismatic' leader is enough to rouse the enthusiasm of the people, in whose eyes he is the country's saviour and only hope. He has disciples, sends messages and speaks like an oracle. He is Stirner's 'Individual', whose individualism, however, is not a-social and anarchist but authoritarian in character. Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*:

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One man must emerge from the multitude of perhaps millions of people, who with irresistible force will extract rock-firm beliefs from the flux of popular ideas and will fight for those beliefs, maintaining that they and they alone are right, until a granite rock of single-minded faith and will arises from the inconstant sea of unrestricted thought.

Elsewhere in the same book he writes:

*He who wishes to be a leader bears the ultimate responsibility and the heaviest responsibility as well as his supreme and unbounded authority. He who is not fit for this or is too cowardly to face the consequences of his actions is not suitable to be a leader. Only a hero is suited to leadership.*

The true leader rules the masses and does not let himself be ruled by them. Nietzsche painted a vivid picture of the false leader. He wrote:

*The recipe for what the masses call a great man is easily given. Under all circumstances must they be given something that they find very pleasing, or they must be given the idea that they would find it very pleasing, and then they must be given it. But under no circumstances must they be given it at once; it must be struggled for with the greatest expenditure of effort, or at least seem to be so struggled for. The masses must be made to believe that a powerful, yea, an indomitable will is at work; at least such a will must seem to be at work. Everyone admires a strong will, because nobody has one and everyone assures himself that if he had one there would be no limits to circumscribe him and his egoism. If it appears that such a strong will, instead of listening to its own appetites, is bringing about something very pleasing to the masses, more wonder is aroused and people congratulate themselves. Moreover let him (i.e. the owner of this will) have all the characteristics of the masses. The less ashamed they*



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are in front of him the more popular he will be. 'Thus let him be violent, envious, domineering, designing, fawning, cowering, conceited, everything according to circumstances.

The picture Nietzsche paints us of the true hero, the Superman, is very different, although you will readily understand that my ideas do not entirely coincide with his. Your true leader carries within himself the certainty of his own mission. One November evening at Fontainebleau Napoleon asked Cardinal Fesch, who had been deploring the arrest of Pius VII, if he could see anything in the clouded sky, and when the cardinal answered that he could not, Napoleon said: 'Very well, you had better learn to hold your peace; for I can see my star.' You will agree that it is difficult to answer a man who sees stars that are invisible to others. At the age of fifteen Henri de Saint-Simon ordered his servant to say to him every morning when he woke him, 'Get up, *M. le comte*, because you have great things to do.' Later he sent Louis XVIII a letter that began with the words: 'Prince, listen to the voice of God, Who talks through my mouth.'

MR. W. Have you much more to read from your breviary, Professor?

THOMAS THE GYMNIC In these discussions I wish to refrain as far as possible from answering quotation with quotation. Nothing is more ridiculous in my opinion than for men who are discussing contemporary facts to be everlastingly searching for explanations in dead authors instead of examining and analysing what is in front of their eyes. Nevertheless, sometimes I shall be forced to quote, and for two reasons in particular. In the first place we shall often be discussing facts which have been so travestied by propaganda that your knowledge of them is bound to be imperfect. In these cases it will be necessary to correct your erroneous impressions and quote my sources in doing so. In the second place I shall sometimes find myself

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dealing with older ideas which have often been explained in the past but are no longer current because they are inconvenient to the propagandists; and when I recall them, so that they may enlighten us to-day, it is only just that I should attribute them to their rightful authors, so that they may get their due and I may not seem to be decking myself out in borrowed plumage. Your story about Count Henri de Saint-Simon suggests an interesting point, my dear professor. Why did he order his servant to repeat those words to him every morning? After all, he might have written them on a piece of paper and put it at his bedside, or suspended it from the ceiling by a string so that it hung right over his nose. But neither of those stratagems would have been so effective. The servant was necessary because to a certain extent he represented society. 'Individual greatness is always a social function,' Trotsky has written. *You cannot have a king without subjects or a leader without those who are willing to be led.* We shall not arrive at any clear understanding of the dictator's function if we confine ourselves solely to the consideration of his personality, as we have been doing so far. We shall also have to consider the relations between the dictator and the masses. It is in the stormy vicissitudes of these that the multitude of those who are called is thinned down into the little band of the chosen. In connection with this you will notice how significant is the agreement between the thought of the divine Plato and the more recent discoveries of Freud. The Greeks believed that it was not the tyrant who made the slave but the slave who made the tyrant, just as in certain primitive forms of life the subject is determined by the object. ('It is not the fish that takes the worm but the worm that takes the fish.') Every generation has the government it deserves. Have free peoples ever submitted to tyranny or servile people enjoyed liberty for long? In the *Republic* Plato describes how the various forms of government decay and succeed one another and how from extreme

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democracy there often arises its opposite, tyranny. He calls the demagogues who helped inflame the unruly passions of youth *tyrannopoi*, tyrant-makers, and a 'tyrannical' generation that which promoted the moral and political disorder of a city, thus facilitating a *coup d'état* by some adventurer. This fundamental idea of the intimate relationship between the organization of society and the way its members feel and behave, and the consequent internal significance of facts which are apparently entirely external and violent, such as the seizure of power by a band of ruffians, was for a long time lost sight of by students of political science, who laid all stress on the initiative, the energy, the will of the leader, as if he were all-important and as if the masses remained entirely passive or simply did not count. The ancient Greek idea is confirmed and amplified by the discoveries of modern psychology. In the years of infancy and adolescence, the external constraint represented by the father-figure, at first no doubt the real father and later, perhaps, a schoolmaster, a priest or a policeman, is gradually absorbed and incorporated within us as a kind of moral supreme court which imposes itself on the self and the ego, the conscious and the unconscious mind. Freud calls it the ego-ideal or super-ego, and we end by adopting it so thoroughly that we feel it to be a part of ourselves. If a boy in whom this phenomenon has taken place is still afraid of disobeying his father even though there is not the slightest risk of discovery, it is not so much from fear of punishment as from fear of his own internal judge. This psychological mechanism, which is common to all mankind, plays a decisive part in the relations between a political leader and the people. The individuals who compose the people incorporate the leader-figure into their own ego-ideal, making it completely a part of themselves. At the same time they completely transfigure their leader (the real leader, that is to say, and not the leader inside them) bestowing upon him all the qualities desired by their ego-ideal.

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Thus a complete psychological exchange takes place. On the one hand, the leader is introjected by his followers and becomes an integral part of their psychological make up, the 'better', the 'ideal' part, while on the other their ego-ideal is externalized, projected outside them and incarnated in him. Thanks to this psychological process, by which the masses identify themselves completely with their leader, all the individuals of whom the masses consist, even the humblest and most wretched among them — I should say, especially the humblest and most wretched among them — are able to dismiss their own wretchedness and helplessness and take an illusory revenge on life; at the same time the leader's personality is promptly made to transcend the mediocrity of his real ego and is endowed with all the qualities which millions of poor devils would dearly love to have themselves, and he rockets up to the skies surrounded with the halo of a national hero, a mythical saviour. He is the individualized product of a great collective dream. All that is required is for the Pope to declare him 'a special envoy of Providence', and the fiction is complete. Those who escape the collective hypnosis and try to discuss or criticize him, or recall his origins, his misspent youth, his limited education, his cowardice, his inadaptability to ordinary life, are wasting their time, because there is very little connection between what the present leader of Italian Fascism, for example, represents in the imagination of many Italians and foreigners and the Mr. Benito Mussolini of the pre-War years. True, the first *fasci* were founded by this Mr. Benito Mussolini, but it was Fascism that created the Duce, investing the rather commonplace personality of the former Benito Mussolini with the virtues, failings and aspirations of the ego-ideal of millions of Italians. If you attempt to criticize the Duce or discuss his character or behaviour 'objectively' with a convinced Fascist you expose yourself to the same sort of difficulties as you would if you entered a church and said: 'Can't you see, my good

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woman, that the statue of St. Antony before which you are kneeling lacks even artistic value and is a worthless piece of *papier mâché*?' The good woman would scratch your eyes out. Criticizing the leader in the presence of a true Fascist is equivalent to attacking his greatest pride, the source from which he draws comfort and consolation to alleviate the difficulties of real life. He will react to you as though you had tried to stab him to the heart. The closeness of the identification between the leader and the mass explains the solidarity of Fascist organizations. Does the leader say and do to-day the very opposite of what he was saying and doing yesterday? It makes no difference, because the strongest tie that binds him to the masses is not a political idea or a political programme. 'If my leader acts in this manner, it must be right!' the rank-and-file Fascist thinks; and since he believes that the only reason he has not had the personal success in life that he should have had is that he is not clever or cunning enough, his ego-ideal makes him proud to believe that 'his' leader is so clever and cunning, and so skilful at deceiving his enemies by frequent changes of policy. The Fascist leader is not only a political leader, he is not even first and foremost a political leader; first and foremost he takes the place of the father in the childish mind of the masses, the father who is protector, breadwinner, judge, master and guide. Hence the Fascist leader's enormous advantage over the democratic politician, whom the electors generally see every four or five years at election times, that is, if they see him at all.

MR. W. This morning, out of pure curiosity, we stopped a number of people in the street and asked them if they could tell us who is the President of the Swiss Confederation. All except two shrugged their shoulders, as if that were really too much to ask; and of the two who answered our question only one was right, because the other mistook last year's president for this year's. What a blessed country!

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THOMAS THE CYNIC You must not conclude that the politicians of Switzerland are in any way inferior to those of other countries or that in case of necessity and with the aid of a little propaganda a Swiss might not be made to seem a demi-god too. But it is true that the relations between the inhabitants of this fortunate little country, which did not take part in the War and suffered relatively little in the depression, are still sober and normal, and the state authorities have no need whatever to clothe themselves with mystification. The people of this country are disinclined by nature to abstract ideologies and nebulous myths, and for that reason some Swiss authors and literary men complain, and cast envious glances towards neighbouring countries, and are almost ashamed of being Swiss, thus mistaking a virtue for a vice.

PROFESSOR PICKUP You have not explained why Fascist leaders are better able than democratic leaders to identify themselves with the masses, nor why this phenomenon took place in Germany and Italy and not in England and France.

THOMAS THE CYNIC That raises a broader problem; from psychology we must pass to sociology and history. When society . . .

AN UNKNOWN VOICE Be quiet!

PROFESSOR PICKUP Did you hear that voice and that mysterious banging on the wall? . . . What? Didn't you really? Didn't you think it sounded just like Mussolini?

MR. W. Don't get scared, professor. Why are you trembling like that? It wasn't Mussolini. It was only the man in the next room who wants to go to sleep. Good-night, Mr. Cynic. I look forward to resuming again in the morning.



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FASCIST PARTY POLITICS





## DIALOGUE VII

### ON THE FUTURE DICTATOR'S PARTY

MR. W. At Rome, as I have already mentioned, we met many people belonging to the Fascist party; poets and academicians in resplendent uniforms, looking like fancy-dress admirals, generals covered with as many medals as fish have scales, reverend *monsignori* perfumed with incense, and ladies of the high aristocracy vaguely smelling of moth-balls. They looked at us with amused curiosity, as though we were redskins, and no wonder. Those who were kind enough to invite us to coffee or to a meal in a restaurant never failed to bring with them their aunts and uncles and brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, not to mention their innumerable brood, and they invariably left us the privilege of paying the bill. But that is not what I want to talk about now. What struck me very forcibly was that my followers in America are of an entirely different type. It made me wonder whether the two movements may not be so unlike as to be hardly comparable.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Mr. W., you must not be in too much of a hurry. There is not the slightest doubt that when once you have come into power the poets and prelates, the fine ladies and the smart gentlemen, will all flock round you. With a very few exceptions, they swarm round success like flies round a honey-pot, or, if you prefer it, like mice round cheese. Under a democratic regime they are democrats, and under a Fascist dictatorship they are naturally Fascists. *Victrix causa deis*—even the ancient pagans knew that the winning cause was pleasing to the gods; one should not therefore be surprised that priests find it similarly attractive. Christian theologians subse-

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quently rationalized the pagan observation, explaining that all authority came from God. As for the ladies, it is known that the tender Venus always had a special weakness for Mars, the god of war.

PROFESSOR PICKUP I entirely agree. Parasites always throng round the victor's car. But Mr. W. did not fully explain the question in his mind. The position is this. The parasites are not yet behind him, and that is natural enough, because they are always on the stronger side. What is more serious is that his supporters are not in any way comparable to the Fascist or Nazi parties in the early days. Mr. W.'s followers increase in number every month, and there are many who already regard him as the man of to-morrow and the future dictator of America. But there is no real party behind him such as is described in Fascist literature. The Fascist party, as we know, is distinguished from others by being a 'granite block of consciousness and will', 'a cohort of steel consecrated to death', 'a single body and a single mind at the orders of a leader'. To find a historical parallel to the parties with which Hitler and Mussolini stormed the citadel of state one would have to go back to the three hundred Spartans led by King Leonidas against the gigantic Persian host, who found death and eternal glory in the pass of Thermopylae. But it is useless to deny that Mr. W.'s party is quite a different kettle of fish.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Let us leave Leonidas and his heroic Spartans out of it, professor. You have formed an entirely false picture of the origin and development of the Fascist party. The chief reason it is false is that it is static. If we take the Italian Fascist Party, for example, it is easy to show that its composition changed radically at every phase of its stormy political career. The first *fasci* formed in the chief cities of Italy in 1919 consisted almost exclusively of former war volunteers, demobilized officers, disabled ex-servicemen, *arditi* and students. In 1920 the *fasci* spread to the country as a result of the support given

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to the new movement by the big landowners and many small peasant proprietors who had grown rich during the War and were terrified of losing their gains, which they believed to be threatened by the claims of the wage-earning classes. It was in this year that D'Annunzio described Fascism as 'an agrarian slavery movement'. In 1921 and 1922, after the failure of the Socialist occupation of the factories, Fascism started gaining a foothold in the towns. It was taken up by artisans, small traders, petty industrialists, technicians, unemployed and ne'er-do-wells, but very few workers. In 1923, after the March to Rome, the Fascist Party was invaded by the state bureaucracy, by clerks and technicians employed by big public companies, and innumerable politicians belonging to the defeated bourgeois parties. Finally, in 1925, according to Mussolini himself, the party was purged from top to bottom as a consequence of the discontent caused by the government's economic and fiscal policy, and the panic that overcame many Fascists as a result of the Matteotti crisis. Thus from 1919 to 1925 the social composition of the Italian Fascist Party underwent profound modifications no fewer than five times. The internal convulsions that the German National-Socialist Party went through in its early years were more complicated, more stormy and more protracted. The first small groups formed by the German Workers' Party at Munich and the German Social Party at Nuremberg between the beginning of 1919 and the summer of 1921 consisted of officers of the Freikorps, journalists, doctors, impoverished artisans, and students, as well as a few workers hostile to their own class organizations. The separatist Bavarian unions were then numerically stronger, and were a decisive influence in causing the infant Nazi Party to become a party of the dissatisfied and rebellious middle strata of the cities. That was the situation after Hitler had eliminated the founders of his own party at the end of July 1921, and established himself as its leader. The party grew in

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1922 and 1923 and set up branches outside Bavaria, but its social composition remained practically unchanged right up to the wretched failure of the *putsch* of November 1923. When the Nazis abandoned their anti-parliamentary tactics and decided to have no more truck with armed risings, they were enabled for some time to assume the leadership of that part of the peasant class that had profited greatly from the inflation and was therefore dissatisfied with the conservative parties that put an end to it. In North Germany, where the Nazi Party had been prohibited, the German People's Party gained a foothold among the officer and landowning class, and a substantial proportion of its members later went straight over to the Nazis. At the end of 1924, while Hitler was in prison as a result of the *putsch* of the previous year, the Nazi Party underwent a severe crisis, in the course of which it split and lost the majority of its adherents. The new economic situation of the following year, culminating in the American loans to Germany, liquidated the influence of Nazism in the countryside. Between 1925 and 1929 Hitler was forced to rebuild his party on a new basis, taking advantage of anything that offered; in the Rhineland the many small ruined traders as well as permanently unemployed workers gathered behind Gregor Strasser and Goebbels; in the East, the renegades from Social-Democracy and Communism gathered behind Otto Strasser; the Nationalist Stoehr, leader of an organization consisting largely of clerks; the absorption of the so-called *Bund der Artamanen*, consisting of unemployed country youths; the landowners in Pomerania and other regions; and noisy bands of students in every university city who had nothing but unemployment to look forward to after graduating. When the great economic crisis began in 1929 the Nazi Party possessed a solid and widespread basis for its gigantic subsequent development. The small ruined traders immediately became the backbone of the Nazi organization in the towns, and members of the black-coated and

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professional classes, which were greatly overcrowded, flowed in in large numbers. In the course of 1930 the Nazi Party succeeded in assuming the leadership of the peasant movement in various parts of Germany, particularly in the north, whipping up to fever-heat the feelings of revolt that had long been latent there. Meanwhile the Nazi movement underwent many vicissitudes among the industrial proletariat, where it met the active opposition of the Communist Party. In 1929 and 1930 the Nazi Party gained undoubted successes among the workers in Saxony, Thuringia, Mecklenburg and Baden. In the competition between the two forms of demagoguery the Nazis also seemed to score some successes among the unemployed workers of Berlin, but these gains were partly wiped out in June 1930, when Otto Strasser and Hitler quarrelled and Strasser's extremist social programme was sacrificed to the pledges that Hitler had given to the big industrialists. The revolutionary incapacity of the Communist leaders, inspired from Moscow, nevertheless saved Hitler, supplying him year after year with increasing numbers of desperate proletarians disappointed in their hopes of a Socialist revolution but ready for any substitute, provided they could really fight for it. But enough of that for the time being. What I have said should be sufficient to convince you, my dear professor, that your ideas about 'blocks of granite' or 'cohorts of steel', however frequently you may find them in the apologetic literature of Fascism, have no relation whatever to the facts.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Mr. Cynic, the way you argue in terms of classes and social groups could only be convincing to a professed Marxist. To my mind what is vital is not class but spirit. Neo-Sociology has clearly established that class is class and spirit is spirit. When an old and incapable governing *élite* is displaced by a new *élite*, I am interested less in the latter's social origin than in the origins of its spiritual formation and the reasons for its ideal superiority over its predecessor.

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THOMAS THE CYNIC Different classes come into power for different reasons and in different ways, and every period of history has different examples to offer us. There was a time when the most frequent method of completely replacing a governing class was a barbarian invasion. Barbarians invaded a country, conquered it, governed it and crushed the previous inhabitants. Thus we may say that an event in foreign politics became an event in domestic politics. On another occasion I shall have no difficulty in establishing some interesting analogies between the ancient barbarian invasions and the consolidation of Fascist movements in modern states. By this I do not mean, as many do, that Fascism is barbaric because it is based on one class rather than on another. My meaning is rather that it is barbaric because it mobilizes and marshals all the relics of primitive barbarism that still survive in modern man, whether plebeian or aristocratic. It frequently succeeds also in contaminating many of its political opponents, who, struggling against Fascism by Fascist methods, become barbarians themselves — Red barbarians. But to return to the point raised by Mr. W., I must confess that I have not discovered exactly what kind of people his followers are.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Briefly, and without wishing to offend Mr. W., the answer is that they are not very respectable people and often not very honourable people. Apart from a few ex-soldiers, personal friends of his from the time of the European War and the agitation for the Veterans' Bonus, and some poor students, the people I have seen at his meetings include malcontents of all classes — ruined business men, unemployed workers, hysterical women, farmers impoverished by taxes and mortgages. Sometimes I have felt I might have been attending a Salvation Army meeting. Let me explain that what disturbs me is not the humble origin of the majority of Mr. W.'s followers (were not the twelve Apostles fishermen?) but their lack of discipline, their turbulence and their vulgarity. Whatever you

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may think of totalitarian regimes, you cannot deny that they restore the social order and the hierarchic principle. Recently I have been doing my best to draw supporters of a better quality into Mr. W.'s movement — university professors, artists, gentlemen . . .

THOMAS THE GYNIC Mr. W., for heaven's sake, don't have anything to do with such people. They are not only pretentious but cowardly, and therefore useless, and they will be nothing but a burden to you. Let them come later, but not now. It is, of course, true that when a Fascist party is in power it becomes a party of order. But if it is to achieve power it must begin as a party of disorder and indiscipline. You have therefore no need to be ashamed of your present-day followers, Mr. W. Thanks to them, your movement is not only in the Fascist tradition but in the great tradition of dictatorial parties of all times. Aristotle himself wrote that 'most tyrants have been demagogue and have gained the confidence of the people by slandering the patricians'. He based this opinion on examples that were recent in his time — the tyrannies of Peisistratus of Athens, Cypselus of Corinth, Peisistratus of Athens, Dionysius of Syracuse, and others as well. To suppose that tyranny as a historical phenomenon has always been the result of an upper-class plot against the people is a mere piece of democratic stupidity. On the contrary, the ancient tyrants, even when they were not of plebeian origin themselves, always depended on popular support, and always had to fight the aristocracy to achieve and maintain their position. The turbulent history of all tyrannies was the result of the permanent conflict between the aristocrats who desired to preserve their privileges and the tyrant who stirred up the people against them. Even the revolts against tyrants and the assassinations of which history speaks were all, without any exceptions whatever, the work of aristocrats. In ancient Greece tyranny was an instrument of democracy. We shall see later, if you have the patience, how



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much of the primitive plebeian character of ancient tyrannies survives in modern dictatorships of the Fascist type.

MR. W. Mr. Cynic, I find what you have been saying extremely interesting. But may I ask you not to express yourself in generalizations and to restrict yourself as much as possible to concrete facts? It is true that that will not enable us to establish any profound or abstract truths about the matter we are discussing, but quite likely it will help us to clear up some definite, well-established facts. The latter, in my opinion, are far more important.

THOMAS THE CYNIC I entirely agree with you and I shall try to remember what you say. In times of confusion of words and ideas the straightforward marshalling of certain facts is worth more than the most daring intellectual syntheses. Well then, according to the historians, between the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. furious civil strife raged in most of the Greek cities. The division was between a democratic party on the one hand and an aristocratic party on the other. Generally a member of one of the aristocratic families put himself at the head of the people, seized power, exercised it in a tyrannical fashion, exiled the rival aristocratic families, confiscated their property and distributed it among his own supporters. The historians tell us, moreover, that the future dictator's party consisted of mercenaries, more devoted to the fortunes of their captain and his family than to that of the city, and of malcontent citizens who hated the aristocracy who exploited them. The employment of soldiers for purposes of faction had been made possible by the recent introduction of the arrangement by which everyone was a soldier who could provide his own arms. This caused many to become soldiers and risk their lives though they had no rights in the assemblies of their cities. A captain, skilled in gaining a personal ascendancy over the new recruits, was easily able to use them to seize power. Thus we are told that when Athens was divided between the faction of the Pedieis,

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who were rich landowners, and that of the Parali, who were small proprietors, the noble Peisistratus, son of Hippocrates, founded a third faction of the most turbulent plebeians known to him, all of whom were influenced by their common military service. Out of these Peisistratus selected fifty who were particularly strong and daring. He armed them with clubs and seized the Acropolis, establishing himself as the dictator of Athens. Another ancient tyrant, Dionysius of Syracuse, is also worth recalling. He was of humble origin, but succeeded in distinguishing himself as a brave soldier, and was therefore invited to defend the city of Gela against the Carthaginians. There, caring less for the foreign enemy than for the domestic enemy hostile to his ambitions, he suppressed and expropriated the oligarchy and distributed their property to the mercenary soldiers who had helped him. With their support and that of the popular party, he gained control of Syracuse, where he ruled as a tyrant.

PROFESSOR PICKUP What you have been saying is quite correct, Mr. Cynic. But can you tell us why the word 'tyrant' has always been held in such bad repute, especially by democrats?

THOMAS THE CYNIC The word 'tyrant' had an evil connotation even among the thinkers and historians of ancient Greece. But it is important to note that all the latter regarded the people with haughty contempt and were ardent upholders of aristocracy. So effective were the tyrannies as a weapon against the aristocracies that though they were nearly all of brief duration the aristocracies were never able to regain their former undisputed predominance. From a superficial viewpoint of class solidarity, present-day Socialists ought to regard the tyrannies of ancient times in a light different from that in which Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle regarded them. But actually the material fate of the proletariat is for modern Socialists inseparably bound up with the cause of liberty.

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Nevertheless, in spite of the vast difference in historical conditions, it is not difficult to discover surprising analogies between Fascist dictatorships and the tyrannies of ancient times. Similar analogies are to be found in later times. If from Greece we pass to Rome, we find Marius and Sulla, of opposite social origins and conflicting interests and ideals, competing to seize the state power and both using the same means to arrive at the same end.

**PROFESSOR PICKUP** I cannot agree with you about that. Sulla, if I am not mistaken, was an aristocrat. He defended the rights of the Senate and restricted the privileges of the tribunes of the people.

**THOMAS THE CYNIC** Sulla believed he was reinforcing the authority of the Senate and the privileges of the patrician class, but he used a part of the army that was devoted to him to achieve his purpose. He thus imprudently introduced a new element into Roman politics, the professional soldiery. The decisive role played by the latter undermined for ever the political supremacy of the patricians and the Senate which Sulla wished to bolster up. Henceforward Rome was at the mercy of every victorious general, who, if he were to win the devotion of his troops, had no alternative but to embark on demagogic policies exactly resembling those of the Greek tyrants of earlier times.

**PROFESSOR PICKUP** If you put it like that, Mr. Cynic, I agree, and I wish to add something in support of what you say. Another reason why a dictatorial government comes into conflict with the upper classes is that they alone are in a position to influence government policy and hence threaten to curb the dictator's power. Thus a permanent antagonism between the king on the one part and the pope, the bishops and the barons on the other dominated the history of absolutism, while the bourgeoisie quietly went about its business. Since social phenomena present themselves in their simplest and most

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primitive form in backward countries, nothing is more instructive in this respect than the history of Ivan the Terrible during the chaotic period that followed the wars against Livonia and Poland. Ivan cleverly exploited the popular hatred of the boyars, whom he did not trust. He created the *oprichina*, a kind of sixteenth-century GPU, in defence of his dictatorship. It was an organization of popular composition. Four thousand boyars were executed and many who escaped were expropriated.

THOMAS THE CYNIC It may be said that every form of despotic government has always relied on popular support in order to establish itself, but in Fascism this phenomenon assumes forms and leads to consequences very different from those it led to under absolute monarchies. The popular element in other dictatorial movements of the past recalls Fascism much more closely, as we have already seen in considering the tyrannies of classical antiquity. An example taken from the history of this city will illustrate what I say. In the middle of the fourteenth century, Zurich, which was then a small town, was disturbed, as many other places were, by the lively agitation of the craftsmen, who, although they had secured recognition as citizens, were nevertheless without personal liberty and wished to improve their wretched economic position. They claimed the right to unite in trade guilds and to participate in the administration of the city. The latter was in the hands of the wealthy burghers, the so-called 'pepper-sacks', whose economic and political influence had been increasing in previous decades at the expense of the nobles. The nobles were not in a position to recover the ground they had lost, but one of them, Rudolf Brun, prompted by hatred of the 'pepper-sacks', placed himself at the head of the malcontent craftsmen and incited them with demagogic speeches to rise against the government. Brun had himself elected burgomaster for life and named four nobles among whom his successor was to be chosen after his death. A

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new constitution was established, recognizing the political rights of the craftsmen, who were organized into thirteen guilds, but the consequences of this reform were greatly attenuated by an increase in the power of the nobles. In short, the result of the revolution was that the craftsmen's movement was emptied of its true democratic content in exchange for fictitious concessions, and served only to establish a personal despotism that did not even shrink from betraying the interests of the people to a foreign power.

MR. W. Gentlemen, let us get back to the modern Fascist party, because I can learn all these pretty stories for myself by going to the cinema.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Very well. Mr. W., you will remember that I told you not to be ashamed of the plebeian origin of your present supporters, because they are precisely of the type by which every dictator, without a single exception, has been carried to power. Cromwell's Blackshirts were called Ironsides, the Stormtroopers and Black Guards of Louis Napoleon, nephew of the great Napoleon, were members of the Society of the Tenth of December. Karl Marx describes this organization brilliantly in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*. If I read you the passage I think you will agree that it gives a foretaste of modern times. The Society of the Tenth of December was founded in 1849. Marx wrote:

Under the pretext of founding a charitable institution, the Parisian slum proletariat had been organized in secret sections. Each section was under the leadership of Bonapartist agents, and the whole was under the command of a Bonapartist general. Side by side with broken-down *roués* of uncertain means of livelihood and questionable antecedents, decayed adventurers who had dropped out of the ranks of the bourgeoisie, there were vagabonds, disbanded soldiers, ex-convicts, fugitives from the galleys, sharpers, mountebanks, beggars, pickpockets, conjurers, gamesters,

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pimps, brothel-keepers, porters, men of letters, organ-grinders, rag-pickers, knife-grinders, tinkers — in short, all the elements of that vague, dissolute, down-at-heels and out-at-elbows rabble which the French call *la Bohème*. They were kindred elements to Louis Bonaparte, and it was of them that he made the backbone of the Society of the Tenth of December. It was indeed a charitable institution, inasmuch as all its members, like Napoleon himself, were animated by the desire to feather their own nests at the expense of the working part of the nation . . . What the national workshops were for the Socialist workers, what the *Garde Mobile* was for the bourgeois republicans, the Society of the Tenth of December was for Bonaparte — his own partisan fighting force. On his journeys detachments composed of members of the society were packed away in the train, to improvise an audience for him, to display the enthusiasm of the 'public', to shout '*Vive l'Empereur!*' to insult and beat up the republicans (of course under police protection). When he returned to Paris, these faithful henchmen must be the vanguard, to forestall or break up counter-demonstrations.

The modern dictatorship of the Fascist type differs politically from Bonapartism in many respects, both in the way in which it achieves power and the way in which it maintains itself in power. Nevertheless, all the features of the Society of the Tenth of December described by Karl Marx were to be met with in the Italian Fascist movement of 1919-20, in addition, of course, to other, specifically post-war features. An observer who watched the development of the *fasci* in Italy at close quarters described them as follows:

They (the *fasci*) are composed of the professionals of violence, often demobilized or active soldiers, cowardly professional murderers (*bravi*) who were unscrupulously recruited from the depths. But young people joined them in large numbers, animated by fanaticism, conviction,

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romanticism or sport. Around them, supporting them, were to be found various sections of the bourgeoisie, rich and poor intellectuals, some prompted by economic and other interests, others by social and aesthetic hostility towards the proletariat pressing forward to power.

The conclusion of a Fascist, A. Zerboglio, was not very different. Writing on the basis of his own observations, he says that among the early Fascists university students and secondary schoolboys predominated,

followed by ex-officers and non-commissioned officers, artisans, petty tradesmen, farmers and a few workers; many 'idealists', young firebrands inspired by a glowing patriotism, people thirsting for action, for whom Fascism meant a kind of sport, declassed members of the bourgeoisie fighting desperately for their position, but doing so not against the general good but for the general good, because the danger to which they were exposed was the obvious and immediate danger that threatened the general good.

The 'professionals of violence' disappear in Zerboglio's account under the veil of a more 'objective' description, but their presence in the first *fasci* is beyond dispute. Most of them entered the *fasci* by way of the *arditi*. The *arditi* were infantrymen specially picked, for dangerous work at the front in 1917. Apart from the officers, most of them came from the *Lumpen-proletariat* and from the not inconsiderable number of criminals who were pardoned in 1915, enrolled in the army and sent to the front. But apart from the *arditi*, many other habitual criminals who were under police supervision were introduced into the *fasci* by police officials, whose identity is known, for the specific purpose of destroying Socialist organizations.

MR. W. Are Italian criminals so amenable to the counsels of authority?

THOMAS THE CYNIC The counsels were not platonic, A

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criminal who joined a *fascio* and took part in a campaign against the Socialists would be relieved of the obligation of reporting weekly to the police; or if he had been forbidden to live in a big town, the ban would be removed; moreover he was entitled to carry arms, and the *fascio* paid him a quite high regular wage. Moreover, he practically always had the assurance that he could carry out political crimes with complete impunity. But above and apart from the desirability of ingratiating himself with the police, he had a more powerful incentive still. Habitual professional criminals, most of them living a life detached from the proletariat and peasantry and outside the productive process, feel a natural and insurmountable repugnance at the prospect of a revolution, such as a Socialist revolution, which aims at making work the basis of social relations and holds out the expectation of obligatory work for everyone. On the other hand, they wholeheartedly admire the luxury of the wealthy bourgeoisie, whose fashions and vices at any rate they try to imitate. Criminals no doubt frequently infringe the sacred laws of private property; nevertheless, they remain within its ideological frontiers, even if they interpret them in their own way. The truth is that nobody has a more intense yearning for private property or a more passionate yearning to become a capitalist than your professional thief. If a professional thief brings off a really good *coup*, which sometimes happens, he becomes a man of model respectability, an honourable upholder of religion and charity, and a rabid defender of the rights of property, which, as we all know, is the fruit of intelligence and hard work. But even if he is unlucky for the whole of his life, he is thoroughly imbued with the bourgeois outlook and is therefore a permanent candidate for the irregular militia of bourgeois society, as he has been from the days of the worthy Bonapartist Society of the Tenth of December to the days of Mussolini's glorious *fasci*.

MR. W. If you know the history of the American workers' movement, as I have no doubt you do, Mr. Cynic, you will be



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aware that the employment of criminals as strike-breakers is now an old-established custom with us.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Nevertheless, a Fascist party is not the same thing as those numerous organizations of pre-War days which were formed by employers in various countries to counter, if necessary by violence, the economic agitation of the workers. The peculiar originality of a Fascist party lies in the fact that though many of its sections come into being by favour of the bosses, the military authorities and the political police, whose secret or public purpose it is merely to use it as a tool and then to discard it, it nevertheless rapidly grows into an independent political force, overstepping the boundaries assigned to it by its patrons, and finally becomes a candidate for the supreme power of the state. The secret of the Fascist party's success is the position it occupies in society in a state of crisis, between a governing class powerless to meet the country's new needs and an opposition incapable of replacing it. For the Fascist party to be able to seize fortune by the forelock and step into the vacant place it must be led by a leader who is an unbridled demagogue, passionate for success. He must have at his disposal a mob of desperate, penniless ne'er-do-wells, a mob in revolt against the governing class and the old political parties, including the so-called revolutionary parties, and finally a mob that has passed through a war and is familiar with death. I believe that when such a party is formed in our times its prospects are excellent.

MR. W. I should like to hear your ideas on the peculiar conditions which render Fascist dictatorships possible in our time, Mr. Cynic. But let that wait till we resume our discussion this afternoon.

## DIALOGUE VIII

ON THE PECULIAR CONDITIONS WHICH HAVE MADE FASCIST DICTATORSHIPS POSSIBLE IN OUR TIME AND AT THE SAME TIME FAVOUR THEIR SURVIVAL AND EXPANSION

PROFESSOR PICKUP A somewhat curious person seems to have listened in to our conversation this morning. He says he couldn't help overhearing us, as he was in the next room. He says he would like to join us and take part in our discussion, if you gentlemen agreed.

MR. W. I don't like eavesdroppers.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Even if he were not an eavesdropper I should object to his joining us, professor. Three is the ideal number for a proper discussion. Two are not enough and four are too many; you remember the ancient precept *ne quarta loqui persona laboret*.

MR. W. Very well, then, let us remain alone and get down to brass-tacks. Mr. Cynic, do you believe democracy to be in danger in America too? Do you believe the conditions which make Fascism possible exist in America? You know that many deny it.

THOMAS THE CYNIC If my reply is that what happens in America depends on the Americans, you may think it a truism. Nevertheless, it is the best answer I can give you. To satisfy you, however, I may remind you of what Machiavelli would have said in answer to such a question, namely that

no form (of government) is stable, because virtue gives birth to quiet, quiet to indolence, indolence to disorder, and disorder to ruin; and similarly from ruin there arises order, from order virtue, and from the latter glory and good fortune.

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This quotation might seem to imply a natural, predestined cycle in the affairs of men, but if you examine it you will see that all the terms Machiavelli uses — virtue, quiet, indolence, disorder, ruin, glory — do not refer to natural phenomena but to human and moral phenomena. Therefore there is nothing inevitable about them. It is not Machiavelli's fault that human morality is not abstract but historical, and that the sons, forgetting the efforts it cost their fathers to attain liberty, are easily liable to get bored with it; and that from their boredom there arises indolence, and from indolence disorder and from disorder ruin.

PROFESSOR PICKUP I believe, with Spengler, that a natural destiny regulates the birth, the flowering and the decline of civilizations. Decadence creeps over empires and republics just as old age creeps over man. From this there is no escape. Up to what point is America involved in the decline of the West? In some respects Spengler's brilliant diagnosis seems to me to be even more applicable to our country than it is to Europe; in other respects it seems less applicable. In the worst case, however, a heroic duty is ours. On that, too, I am in entire agreement with Spengler. He wrote:

Duty is remaining erect at one's post though it be lost without hope and without salvation. It is to stand firm, like the Roman soldier whose bones were found at a gateway at Pompeii, who died because no one remembered to relieve him from his post at the outbreak of the eruption of Vesuvius. That is true greatness. An honourable end is the only thing of which a man cannot be deprived.

MR. W. How did Spengler know the soldier was there on sentinel duty? Who told him that he stayed at his post because no one relieved him? He might just as well have been there because he had a date with a girl.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Oh, well, have it that way if you prefer it.

MR. W. I asked you a simple question. What I prefer or don't

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prefer is quite irrelevant. I asked you a scientific, not a poetical question, professor. When a scientist makes a statement he ought to give his evidence.

THOMAS THE CYNIC In Spengler's case there is no question of science but only of poetry, Mr. W., and of perverse, turgid and portentous poetry at that. There has been a great flowering of that kind of poetry in Germany during recent decades, and the various 'millenarian' perspectives it has produced have as a rule had a currency of but a few years each, depending on the ups and downs of the political and economic situation. In a country which has made such tremendous contributions to thought it is really sad to observe the widespread popularity enjoyed by 'systems' in which poetry, science, history, religion, occultism and cosmology are compounded into horrid brews which cause nothing but confusion among the 'educated' public, and can well be said to be profound, very profound indeed, because they have no bottom or inside whatever. Where these 'systems' and their advocates end up is already well known. The German followers of Spengler up to a few years ago were prophesying doom and announcing the inevitable downfall of Europe (it was, of course, a splendid consolation to those who had lost all their savings in the inflation to be told that, though they were ruined, others would very soon get their deserts too!). But as soon as the Nazis came into power their gloom was transformed into rosy optimism, and now they sing jubilant hymns to the eternal youth of the German people and the evergreen Nordic forest. The prophets of disaster, who had assumed the toga of the Pompeian legionary and were scanning the horizon in expectation of the imminent volcanic eruption that was to bury them, after they had struck a suitably heroic attitude, beneath piles of ashes and lava, now dispense beer and sausages at the outings of the 'Strength through Joy' organization. The apocalypse has been transformed into a beanfeast.

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PROFESSOR PICKUP I hope you don't expect me to reply. It would be wasting my breath. *Contra principium negantem non est disputandum.*

THOMAS THE CYNIC I mean no disrespect to your convictions, my dear professor, but I must point out that from the Fascist point of view Spengler's 'cultural morphology' failed badly in at least one respect. It failed to foresee the Rome-Berlin axis! But joking apart, if one is to think clearly about political events and their underlying causes one must abandon such false ideas as that there are 'young countries' and 'old countries', as if all the various manifestations of life had the same rhythm and developed and decayed together, passing through the inevitable stages of youth, maturity and decline. It is easy to see that development is much more complicated and contradictory than that, and that in the same country at the same time there are institutions and forms of life which are old and declining while others are young and budding and others again which remain for a long time in embryonic form. Human history in the last analysis is always the work of men. The explanation of the rise of Fascism and Nazism in our time must therefore be sought among men and their way of reacting to economic, social and political realities. The same applies to the conditions that seem to favour the survival of Fascism and its further propagation. What are the reasons for the plight of democratic institutions to-day? Allow me to read you a passage from the fifth book of Aristotle's *Politics*, in which he discusses the causes of the failures of democracy in the city-states of ancient Greece. You will see at once that Aristotle's words provide a superlative introduction to the subject we are discussing. They will also help to wash away the taste of Spengler's 'cultural morphology'. Aristotle says:

Revolutions in democracies are generally caused by the intemperance of demagogues, who either in their private capacity lay information against rich men until they com-

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pel them to combine (for a common danger unites even the bitterest enemies), or coming forward in public they stir up the people against them. The truth of this remark is proved by a variety of examples. At Cos the democracy was overthrown because wicked demagogues arose, and the notables combined. At Rhodes the demagogues not only provided pay for the multitude, but prevented them from making good to the trierarchs the sums which had been expended by them; and they, in consequence of the suits which were brought against them, were compelled to combine and put down the democracy. The democracy at Heracleia was overthrown shortly after the foundation of the colony by the injustice of the demagogues; they drove out the notables, who came back in a body and put an end to the democracy. Much in the same manner the democracy at Megara was overturned; there the demagogues drove out many of the notables in order that they might be able to confiscate their property. At length the exiles, becoming numerous, returned, and engaging and defeating the people, established an oligarchy. The same thing happened with the democracy of Cyprus which was overthrown by Thrasyarchus. And we may observe that in most states the changes have been of this character. For sometimes the demagogues, in order to curry favour with the people, wrong the nobles and so force them to combine — either they make a division of their property, or diminish their incomes by the imposition of public services, and sometimes they bring accusations against the rich that they may have their wealth to confiscate.

Of old, the demagogue was also a general, and democracies changed into tyrannies. Most of the ancient tyrants were originally demagogues. They are not so now, but they were then; and the reason is that they were generals and not orators, for oratory had not yet come into fashion. Whereas in our day, when the art of rhetoric has made such progress, the orators lead the people, but their ignorance of military matters prevents them from usurping

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power; at any rate instances to the contrary are few and slight. Formerly tyrannies were more common than they are now, because great power was placed in the hands of individuals; thus a tyranny arose at Miletus out of the office of the Prytanis, who had supreme authority in many important matters. Moreover, in those days, when cities were not large, the people dwelt in the fields, busy at their work; and their chiefs, if they possessed any military talent, seized the opportunity, and winning the confidence of the masses by professing their hatred of the wealthy, they succeeded in obtaining the tyranny. Thus at Athens Peisistratus led a faction against the men of the plain, and Theagenes at Megara slaughtered the cattle of the wealthy, which he found by the river side where they had put them to graze. Dionysius, again, was thought worthy of the tyranny because he denounced Daphnaeus and the rich; his enmity to the notables won for him the confidence of the people. Changes also take place from the ancient to the latest form of democracy; for where there is a popular election of the magistrates and no property qualification, the aspirants for office get hold of the people, and contrive at last even to set them above the laws. A more or less complete cure for this state of things is for the separate tribes, and not the whole people, to elect the magistrates.

This page of Aristotle is more valuable, in my opinion, than a whole pile of contemporary political books. Aristotle is an advocate of aristocracy and makes no attempt to hide his opinions. *He sees things clearly and describes them plainly.* If we reflect that two thousand four hundred years of intellectual 'progress' separate Aristotle from Giovanni Gentile, Möller van den Bruck, Carl Schmitt and Spengler, we have very little to be proud of. This passage from Aristotle can be brought up to date without any straining of the text. What he tells us is that in the Greek city-states democracy depended on a certain balance between the class of the rich and the class of the poor,

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the power being in the hands of a popular assembly. But as soon as that balance was upset, democracy was imperilled, whether because the poor had nothing to eat and demanded state assistance or because the rich considered themselves to be too heavily taxed and refused to put up with additional sacrifices. The destruction of social equilibrium resulted in two conflicting movements: on the one hand, an oligarchic movement, a conspiracy on the part of the rich aiming at the destruction of democracy, the revival of the rule of their own families, and the elimination of popular control; on the other, a movement leading to a *coup d'état* by the populace and the soldiery under the leadership of a demagogue aiming at the imposition of a 'tyranny'. In either case there was an end of democracy. Nowadays class relations are less simple than they were then; nevertheless, one may say that a modern democratic state, in spite of its nominal recognition of all citizens as equal, is in reality based on a definite equilibrium between the various social classes. Workers, clerks, technicians are paid such-and-such, peasants and landlords obtain such-and-such a yield from the soil, merchants, industrialists and financiers obtain such-and-such a yield from the employment of their capital; and the same may be said of the numerically less important social groups, such as the artisans, the members of the liberal professions, etc., who fulfil an important function in a democracy as intermediaries between the major classes, and whose conditions of livelihood have also to be protected and preserved. Corresponding to this fundamental equilibrium, which is intimately related to the economic structure of society, are adequate legal, moral and political relations between classes and citizens, and these constitute what is commonly called the social order. Now it suffices for a single one of the above-mentioned factors to be altered and democracy is imperilled. It may still nominally continue to exist, bolstered up by the state apparatus and the traditional party system. But if for



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any reason wages or incomes or profits become insufficient, if one of the classes is attacked by the others and feels that its existence is at stake, the social equilibrium on which the whole democratic regime is based is upset and democracy is in peril. The peril is real and undeniable, even if the party in power has a strong parliamentary majority and is able to pretend it does not exist. In the latter case, indeed, the crisis will be all the graver, because it will explode and be settled in the streets. It will not be impossible to re-establish democracy later, on other social foundations and with a new political personnel at the helm, but it will be an extremely difficult task, because, as a result of the upsetting of the old equilibrium, the various classes who have been contesting the power will have resorted to methods essentially the same as those mentioned by Aristotle, methods which inevitably leave an obstinate trail of hatred and resentment in their wake. The classes which go down in the struggle do not easily resign themselves to their fate, and they therefore continue to conspire and plot against the new regime, which will for a long time lead a stormy and insecure existence; even if the new governors make democratic laws, their value will be entirely fictitious and they will remain a dead-letter; they will be inapplicable. To pass from the general to the particular, I shall not need many words to remind you of the objective facts which caused one country after another in post-war Europe to pass through a period of internal disequilibrium that obstructed the normal functioning of democratic institutions. The war had upset the old relations between the various countries, as well as the relations between the various classes within the various countries and those of the various groups and sub-groups within each class. The countries which had no great reserves, the conquered countries, the weak countries, like Italy, the states that emerged from the peace treaties, led very stormy political lives. The normal functioning of democratic institutions was impossible, because the old order, the

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old hierarchy of political and social forces, had been smashed by the alterations caused by the war. What has happened since was certainly not inevitable, as there are always several ways out of every crisis, the only way that is utterly utopian in such situations being a return to the *status quo*. Many democrats and liberals lulled themselves with hopes of that utopia, seeing only the psychological manifestations of the crisis, the so-called war psychoses, and hoped that they would gradually disappear and that it would be possible to return to the way of life of 1914. But post-war society was no longer the society of 1914.

PROFESSOR PICKUP In the struggle for the new social order the workers were the first to attack. The answer to proletarian violence was violence on the part of others. Before the war this seemed to be the Marxist ideal. Humanity was then said to be 'suffocating' in peace and comfort, and Georges Sorel in his *Réflexions sur la violence* wrote:

How shall the dying vigour of the bourgeoisie be restored? It is in this connection that the historical role of violence seems to us to be particularly great, since it may act in an indirect manner on the bourgeoisie to restore their class feeling.

One cannot deny the Marxists the credit of having recalled many bourgeois to the feelings and duties of their class, and I have therefore copied Sorel's principal ideas on violence into my 'Breviary of Fascist Thought'. No one has ever had a more dynamic conception of social relations than Sorel, who expected every sort of felicity to result from the clash of proletarian and capitalist violence. He was greatly distressed to observe employers taking an interest in social insurance, in sports clubs, in housing schemes for their workers. He wrote:

We are faced with a new and very unexpected fact, a bourgeoisie that is seeking to diminish its own strength. Are we to believe that the Marxist conception is dead?

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Not in the least, because proletarian violence enters the stage at the same time as social peace purports to appease conflicts. Proletarian violence confines the masters to their role of producers and tends to restore the stratification of the classes just when the latter were seeming to mingle in the march of democracy.

And again:

Not only can proletarian violence assure the future revolution, but more, it seems to be the only means at the disposal of the European nations, brutalized by humanitarianism, if their ancient energy is to be restored.

His conclusion was that 'capitalist society would regain its historical perfection' in proportion as the proletariat and the capitalists remained irreconcilable and pugnacious. The battle, after being loudly announced and prophesied for decades, eventually took place. To use Sorel's phrase, society attained its historical perfection. The Marxists, to their own surprise and aided by many exceptional circumstances, were victorious in Russia; in the Balkans, in the Baltic states, in Italy, in Germany, in South America they have been defeated and put *hors de combat*. In other countries the struggle has scarcely begun, though the Marxists can scarcely be said to be inactive spectators. What I really do not understand is why the Marxists, when they are beaten in battles which they have themselves provoked, complain so bitterly and denounce the violence of their enemies so ardently. In my opinion they lack all sporting spirit. They are bad losers. That is even worse than losing.

THOMAS THE CYNIC You are entirely mistaken, my dear professor, if you take Sorel to be a representative of the organized working-class movement. In Italy, where his influence was possibly stronger than it was in France, his only followers were a group of intellectuals, who in 1914 were among the most

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ardent supporters of the campaign for Italian intervention in the war and were among the founders of the first *fasci* in 1919. However, Sorel's ideas about violence cannot be properly understood apart from the basic idea underlying them. Sorel believed it to be useless hypocritically to cover up and conceal the real antagonisms of society, because if that were done the objective content of social life was falsified, moral and intellectual decadence set in and production declined. Sorel therefore proudly opposed parliamentary Socialism and the policies of the reformists and advocated a ruthless class struggle, a straight fight between employers and employed. One observation is sufficient to show how un-Sorelist Fascist violence is. So far from emphasizing the real, objective and historical demarcations between the classes, it has shifted the whole axis of the political struggle, substituting artificial, racial or national divisions for the divisions between the classes. In other words Fascism, with other means and other consequences, has assumed the pre-War function of reformist Socialism, which Sorel opposed as reactionary and immoral. But apart from all that, Sorel's whole conception of the class struggle was aesthetic and childish, and recalls Manzoni's verses on the Battle of Macclodio, beginning:

*Si ode a destra uno squillo di tromba  
a sinistra risponde uno squillo . . .<sup>1</sup>*

But to return to our subject, I should like to correct the erroneous impression that it was Fascism that defeated Socialism, either in Italy or Germany. The truth is that in both countries Fascism was born from the Socialist defeat.

MR. W. and PROFESSOR PICKUP Who did defeat Socialism in Italy and Germany?

THOMAS THE CYNIC Socialism defeated itself. In the post-war crisis of Italian and German society, in the months

<sup>1</sup> A trumpet blast sounds on the right; on the left another trumpet blast replies. . . .

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immediately following the armistice, Socialism appeared to the masses as the only force capable of giving a new form to society and satisfying their human aspirations. In both countries the Socialist movement was hopelessly divided. On the one hand there were the revolutionaries, whose aim was the immediate expropriation of the possessing classes and the setting up of the dictatorship of the proletariat; on the other, the reformists, whose aim was legal and democratic development towards their Socialist goal. In Italy the reformists and the revolutionaries neutralized each other, with the result that the former carried out no reforms and the latter never attempted a revolution. In Germany the Social-Democrats actively helped to crush the Spartakist movement, and so far from attempting to substitute a Socialist economy for the moribund German capitalist economy, never even made a bold or serious effort to democratize the country. What happened instead was that, as has been aptly said, 'the Kaiser departed but the generals remained'. A revolutionary situation does not last for many years, and if the revolutionary party does not seize its chance the disappointed masses turn against it and raise the opposite party to power. In Italy the turning-point came after the occupation of the factories, the evacuation of which broke the *élan* of the workers and demoralized them, and showed them that the party upon whom they had rested their hopes was capable of nothing but verbiage. Up to 1923 the German Socialists still had a chance of decisive intervention in the reorganization of the country, but they too capitulated without a struggle. The Italian and German working-classes had to face the first violent onslaughts of Fascism after their own organizations had begun a disorderly retreat and had abandoned the advanced positions hurriedly occupied, more by surprise than by force, in the months immediately after the armistice. The new situation was exploited by the capitalists, who took the opportunity of shifting the greater part of the burden of economic and financial distress to the

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backs of the masses, and reduced wages in order to be able to meet foreign competition. When the revolutionary danger was exhausted because of the internal deficiencies of the Socialist movement itself, and even before Fascism was a real political force, the bourgeoisie backed Mussolini and Hitler, in order to transform the working-class retreat into a rout and strike a decisive blow at social-reformism, which had grown too expensive. This aspect of the struggle could be observed more plainly in Italy, where the situation developed extremely rapidly under the guidance of a Fascist leader possessing the most realistic political vision. There is no doubt whatever that Fascism rose and developed as a reaction against social-reformism rather than against revolutionary or Communist Socialism. The rich peasants, the merchants, the petty industrialists who joined Mussolini's *fasci en masse* in 1921, did so to find arms to fight the inconvenient reformist institutions which had reduced the profit of their labour and their capital to a minimum. Fascist reaction was most bloodthirsty in the Po Valley provinces, where, in the course of forty years of peaceful activity, the reformists had built up a vast network of leagues, co-operatives, benefit societies and credit institutions, controlling the whole of local economic life and in some areas actually exercising a monopoly. The noisy and ineffectual 'revolutionism' of the Left-wingers imperilled nothing but the public street-lamps and occasionally the bones of an unlucky policeman, but the patient, methodical and legal work of the reformists threatened something far more sacred; the profits of private enterprise; and, more particularly, not the profits of the big banks, to which the reformist institutions themselves had to apply for credits, but the profits of the small business man. The laws of the state provide a sufficient defence for the bourgeoisie against revolutionism of the windbag variety; even if existing laws are inadequate, it is easy enough to make new ones. But when faced with the advance of peaceful, democratic reformism, the bour-

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geoisie appealed for aid to the terrorist gangs of Fascism, and themselves broke the laws by which they felt themselves no longer protected. Later Fascist violence also descended upon the revolutionary Socialists and Communists just when, their hopes of an immediate revolution having faded, they were concentrating upon a campaign to maintain workers' wages and conditions, in order to prevent themselves from being isolated from the masses; and they introduced a combative spirit into this campaign that upset the opportunist calculations of many reformist leaders, who were terror-stricken by the Fascist onslaught and were inclined to compromise. Subsequent developments and complications must not cause us to overlook the essential fact that Fascism is a counter-revolution against a revolution that never took place. Will history repeat itself in this way in other countries? I believe it to be essential if they are to have Fascism. Let me state my meaning in this way. The birth of Fascism presupposes the following conditions: in the first place the state must be in a state of crisis; that is to say, radical social changes must have taken place which are utterly irreconcilable with the old political system. In the second place, the crisis of the state must be of such a nature as to be of most immediate benefit to the Socialist movement, to which the masses must be irresistibly drawn, feeling it to be the only movement capable of creating a new world; in the third place the Socialists, when confronted with their responsibilities, must turn out to be utterly inadequate to the arduous task before them and do nothing but increase the general confusion, completely failing to fulfil the hopes reposed in them. When these three conditions are fulfilled Fascism appears on the scene as *tertius gaudens*, the interloper who steals the plum. Unless its leader is a complete idiot, its prospects are excellent.

MR. W. It is not easy to translate what you have been saying into the language of American politics, because a Socialist movement in the European sense does not exist in our country,

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Mr. Cynic. But as I am anxious to gain a better understanding of what is happening in Europe, I should like to ask you why the failure of Socialism did not help democracy instead of Fascism?

PROFESSOR PICKUP I foresee the usual reply; that the democratic class is weak, devoid of will, and incapable of adapting itself to the new forms of struggle, which are somewhat crude and plebeian and not entirely averse to the use of force. That is a very superficial reply in the eyes of anyone who knows history, and remembers the courage and heroism of those who fought for democracy in past centuries. According to my way of thinking, the explanation of the inferiority of democracy as against Fascism must be sought in the inadequacy of the democratic idea.

THOMAS THE GYNIC It must not be forgotten that so far Fascism has only been established in countries where democracy has never had deep roots; in these countries the democratic idea has therefore had less chance than elsewhere of demonstrating what you call its inadequacy, professor. But even if Fascism is one day established in a country where democracy is older and much more firmly rooted (I do not wish to discourage Mr. W.), that will certainly not mean that the democratic idea is exploded. It will only mean the political defeat of one definite historical form of democracy. I believe the democratic idea will survive all the political forms with which it has so far been identified. When men have succeeded in overthrowing the present exceptional regimes represented by Fascism and Bolshevism, they will return to the democratic idea with the joy of the prisoner returning to freedom, and create new and, it is to be hoped, less fictitious forms of democracy than those we have hitherto known. Whenever, for the sake of brevity, we talk of the crisis of democracy or of the defeat of democracy, we should make it clear that the democratic principle is not in question, but only the peculiar historical form of political democracy commonly called bour-



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geois democracy. There are many signs that the latter is now in decline. The difference between the democrats of the present day and their ancestors, who fought in past centuries for popular liberties, for equality before the law, for political liberties, and risked their lives on the barricades, in civil wars and wars of independence, is very great indeed, professor, and it has nothing whatever to do with individual psychological properties. The idea of political and legal equality used to be a novelty, an ideal, that kindled all minds of quality and caused men to espouse the cause of the people and take part in the struggle against the court, the nobility, the clergy and foreign domination. But the democrats of the present day no longer have an ideal to realize. They are traditionalists, conservatives. They live on the yield of their ancestors' conquests. A class in the ascendant, a class fulfilling a revolutionary function, increases the stature of its representatives, gives them the pre-eminence of Cromwell, Jefferson, Mazzini, Lenin. But a democracy in decline, maintaining itself by compromises and retreats, can only be represented by such people as Giolitti, Brüning, Laval, Chamberlain; and it is to be feared that the more time passes the steeper is the decline. You know that among the politicians of the Left in France there are some who pose as neo-Jacobins, but in their imitation of the Mountain all they achieve is some extravagance of clothing and a certain way of doing their hair. It is not a question of good or bad will. Bourgeois democracy may yet find worthy representatives, but I think this most likely to happen in countries in which democracy has never existed, in feudal, semi-feudal, colonial countries that have only just reached the threshold of the bourgeois revolution. Think of men like Sun-Yat-Sen and Gandhi, and compare them to the democratic ministers of France and England. They belong to the same historical movement, but the former face the dawn and the latter the sunset. In short, the leaders of European democracy

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show all the characteristic signs of a political class that has exhausted its mission.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Goebbels has stated that the success of National-Socialism depended in great measure 'on the stupidity of its opponents'. He wrote,

Our opponents were in possession of the power; the army, the police, the bureaucratic apparatus, the parties, and the parliamentary majority were theirs. They controlled public opinion, the Press, the wireless, in short everything that can be summed up under the term 'power'. If a small group, that began with seven men possessing only the right of criticism, succeeded in the space of fourteen years in wresting this right, together with the power itself, from their opponents, there can be no question as to which was the cleverer. Had our opponents been the cleverer, they could not have failed to find ways and means to prevent us from dispossessing them in view of the gross disproportion of our resources.

THOMAS THE CYNIC From that point of view, every change of regime looks like the result of stupidity on the part of the old ruling class; it looks as if they allowed themselves to be taken by surprise. There are plenty of historians who try to prove that if Louis XVI had acted differently, or if Tsarist circles had done this or that in 1917, neither the Russian nor the French Revolution would have taken place. The same thing might be said of all other revolutions, about all of which there is something incomprehensible in the eyes of the superficial. And it is perfectly true. A governing class, up to the very day of its downfall, possesses all the material means for defending itself, but it lacks the will, the capacity, the courage to use them; and it is the latter which are the essentials of government. Before being beaten and dispossessed physically it has long been morally beaten. It maintains itself by force of short-sighted, supine, will-less inertia. It is affected by the senile diseases of

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formalism and legalitarianism in their most grotesque forms, and, though utterly devoid of its former democratic spirit, continues to pay lip-service to formulas and entrenches itself behind respect for laws and procedure which benefit the opponents of democracy instead of democracy itself, and have the opposite effect to that for which they were devised.

PROFESSOR PICKUP The Fascists and the Nazis certainly succeeded brilliantly in using democracy in order to destroy it. Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*:

Democracy is at best a means to an end, which one uses to cripple one's opponent and leave the road clear for one's own actions.

After the 1928 elections Goebbels wrote:

We enter the Reichstag to provide ourselves with arms in democracy's own arsenal. We become Reichstag deputies in order to lay the Weimar mentality low with its own staff and props. If democracy is stupid enough to give us free passes and assistance in doing it this evil service, that is its own affair.

Two years later he added:

The legal conquest of the Republic is in full swing.

No one could accuse him of lacking candour. In 1935, two years after the conquest of power, he declared:

We National-Socialists have never stated we were democrats. On the contrary, we publicly stated that we only used democratic means to win power, and that after the seizure of power we would ruthlessly deny our opponents all the facilities that were granted us when we were in opposition.

And they have kept their word.

THOMAS THE CYNIC A governing class in decline lives by

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half-measures, from day to day, always postponing the examination of vital questions until to-morrow. If it is forced to make a decision, it appoints committees and sub-committees, and by the time these have completed their labours the situation has changed. Being late means slamming the stable-door after the horse has been stolen. It also means self-deception on the part of statesmen and evasion of their responsibilities; they wash their hands, so to speak, to show them white and clean for the benefit of future historians. The height of the art of government for our contemporary democratic statesmen seems to consist in accepting smacks in the face to avoid having their posteriors kicked; in putting up with the lesser evil, in everlastingly thinking out new compromises in order to smooth over conflicts, in trying to reconcile the irreconcilable. The opponents of democracy take advantage of this, and become ever more impudent. They plot and conspire in open daylight, establish arms dumps, march their supporters through the streets in military formation, beat up the most hated democratic leaders. The government, 'measuring its words carefully in order not to aggravate the situation', deplures all these things, and hopes that 'for the country's good name' they were 'not premeditated', and makes heartrending appeals to the nation to return to a calmer mood. The most important thing in the government's eyes is to avoid any word or action that might irritate the Fascists and aggravate the situation. If the police discover that political and military leaders are implicated in the organization of sedition, and have taken a direct and active part in preparing arms dumps, for instance, the government becomes bold, and a few secondary figures are arrested as a warning. But the leaders are not arrested, because that would mean precipitating an irreparable crisis. The democratic leaders know that they have everything to lose and nothing to gain from the embitterment of political relations. They fondly delude themselves that by their ostrich policy they are gaining time.

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Thus the young Spanish Republic pardoned Sanjurjo and retained the monarchical generals at the head of the army, even though everybody knew they were preparing a *coup d'état*. In Italy the *fasci* who perpetrated acts of violence throughout the country acknowledged Mussolini as their leader and took their orders from him, but Mussolini himself was never touched; and the officers and generals who were members of the *fasci* were retained on the active list. Similarly, 'to contribute to the pacification of the country', the German Republic pardoned Ludendorff after the failure of the Kapp *putsch* in 1920 and of the Hitler *putsch* in 1923, and left unpunished the leaders of the terrorist 'Consul' organization, who ordered the assassination of Erzberger and Rathenau, although there was no doubt about their identity or responsibility for the crimes.

MR. W. In Berlin we met Baron von Killinger and the Duke of Koburg, president of the German Red Cross, who were both members of the 'Consul' organization from the first. They boast publicly now of the assassinations for which they were responsible, and they told us in detail how they were organized. They told us how little trouble they had to take, even in the democratic days, to conceal their own participation in these affairs. Their boldness, in fact, was on a par with the cowardice of the republican authorities.

PROFESSOR PICKUP In his book *Kampf um Berlin* Goebbels wrote:

The cowardice of the bourgeois parties is unexampled in political history;

and elsewhere:

{ We learned once and for all that it was useless to have any hopes of the political bourgeoisie. The political bourgeoisie is cowardly.

MR. W. Nevertheless, there are democrats who are not cowardly, and do not contemplate the development of the

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crisis passively but try to remedy it, if necessary with new laws and bold reforms.

**THOMAS THE CYNIC** It is true that there are democrats who realize the utter futility of such methods of government and propose an extension of the democratic principle to spheres of social life from which it has hitherto been excluded, by means of control over a part of private economy, for example. There have been such democrats even in countries where Fascism is now triumphant, and they suffered the same fate as the reformist Socialists, of whom they are a variation. But the application, even the most kid-gloved application, of control of private economy, when it has been tried in times of acute crisis, has hitherto invariably served only to bring social conflicts to a head, with results, even in the economic sphere, exactly opposite to what was hoped. I confess I am far from being an authority on the subject, but I believe it to be easier to kill a person outright than to hold a knife under his ribs for any length of time. I mean everyone prefers death to prolonged torture. Similarly it is intelligible that capitalists, when their profits are already reduced or uncertain, should prefer sudden expropriation, equivalent to their social death, to the slow torture of continued reforms and restrictions that leave them neither alive nor dead. Capitalists live in holy terror of the Communists, but they hate the reformists more. A capitalist on whom a new tax is imposed becomes as blasphemous as any 'anarchist' or 'atheist'. He need not even be a big capitalist. Peasants, artisans, professional men behave in exactly the same way, and in Italy and Germany they were among the first to abandon the democratic parties and join the Fascist fold. The democrats of whom we spoke could count neither on the richer nor the poorer bourgeoisie to support them in their reforms; nor could they even appeal to the active support of the working-class, because the latter, being imbued with the Marxist spirit, if they started moving at all, would have passed far beyond the limits of

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partial reforms and would undoubtedly have tried to shake the very foundations of bourgeois society. Thus the democratic reformers were condemned to the sterile role of prophets in the wilderness. That was the sum-total of circumstances that made Fascism possible.

MR. W. Don't you think that Italian and German experience has taught the democrats of other countries anything?

THOMAS THE CYNIC It is difficult to learn from other people's experience, Mr. W. Generally one learns in one's youth and from one's own experience, but bourgeois democracy is no longer young, and the experience of past centuries is not of very much use. A still sadder spectacle is provided by those democratic politicians who really try to understand what is happening and do not look upon present-day events with the weary scepticism of men who have lost all real interest. With the best will in the world, they do not succeed in understanding. Their culture is nineteenth-century culture, evolutionist or positivist. They believe in the slow, gradual, inevitable Progress of the human race. How could they understand what is happening before their eyes to-day? Other people may try to explain, but that does not help, because a declining political class suffers from all the afflictions of old age, including deafness. Fénelon sent advice and warnings to his king, indirectly in *Télémaque* and directly in his *Lettre à Louis XIV*, but they were useless. How many warnings did Tsar Nicholas II receive? To have understood them he would have had not to have been the Tsar. A declining political class not only lacks the strength, the capacity, the courage to use the material means at its disposal to govern and to defend itself against the foes that assail it; it even lacks the intelligence to understand the continually changing situation. It understands neither what is happening nor what is brewing. That is why bourgeois democracy in Italy and Germany (it was not very old in either country, but in both it was afflicted with precocious senility) was incapable of profiting by

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the failure of the Socialist revolution to reinforce its own position. Thus the working-class parties had shown themselves incapable of achieving power, and the old democratic leaders were no longer capable of holding it. Since nature abhors a vacuum, society was forced to create a substitute: Fascism.





## DIALOGUE IX

### ON FASCIST MYTHOLOGY, ITS FETISHES AND ITS IDOLS, AND ON THE MODERN TECHNIQUE OF HYPNOTIZING AND SUBDUING THE MASSES

PROFESSOR PICKUP On our way back from our usual walk through the wood, Mr. Cynic, we found the remains of some dainty feminine garments behind a clump of bushes. On the grass there were signs of a furious struggle.

MR. W. I think somebody ought to inform the police. It looked to me as if a crime had been committed.

THOMAS THE CYNIC A crime? Why employ such a serious word for such a petty thing, Mr. W.? Such is human nature that few men entirely succeed in refraining from it. At most you should imitate the priests and call it a sin; if you like, a mortal sin.

MR. W. Oh, well, if that's all it is, there's nothing much to worry about.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Tell me, are the customs of this country so primitive and violent?

THOMAS THE CYNIC On the contrary, the Swiss are a serious, hard-working people, tormented by innumerable inhibitions. Although they have known liberty for centuries, they have never confused it with licence, and not even in periods of general laxity have they abandoned themselves to the light and frivolous customs that were fashionable elsewhere.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Am I then to conclude that this *al fresco* love-making is the consequence of a housing shortage?

THOMAS THE CYNIC There is no housing shortage here, and moreover those who take part in these sylvan love-affairs are said often to be respectable members of the middle class, which

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is rightly considered, here as elsewhere, to be the faithful guardian of tradition and morality. If I am to believe what my friends tell me, they are often decent, middle-aged married people, who have large and comfortably furnished flats at their disposal, equipped with every modern convenience.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Are they then obeying a romantic and irresistible call of nature?

THOMAS THE CYNIC I have pondered long and seriously on this problem, and I have finally decided that the real explanation must be far more profound and obscure than that. One might perhaps have to go right back to the pre-historic inhabitants of this country, *homo alpinus*, primitive Alpine man. This is not the moment to inquire why long-lost customs and emotions should reappear at the present time. Besides, the phenomenon is not limited to the sphere of private life. It has been preceded here by unmistakable manifestations in the world of culture. Even if Johann Jacob Bachofen's matriarchal theory is not relevant to the question, Jung's psychology of the atavistic unconscious and Dr. Bircher's vegetarian, back-to-nature system of medicine certainly are.

MR. W. I am afraid these people's atavistic inclinations will not prevent them from getting rheumatism as a result of lying on the wet grass.

PROFESSOR PICKUP I think it is time we left these trivialities aside and talked of serious things. If I remember rightly, the subject suggested for to-day's discussion was Fascist ideology.

THOMAS THE CYNIC We are nearer that subject than you imagine, my dear professor. I certainly do not wish to imply that Fascist ideology is merely an expression of atavistic impulses; but the links between the former and the latter are innumerable, and are stronger than in the case of any other political movement. In all the countries in which Fascism has triumphed, the axis of political life has been shifted and problems have been revived which seemed to have become obsolete;

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and they have been imposed also on Fascism's opponents. It is, of course, obvious that Fascism, being itself a symptom of the crisis of modern civilization, has been unable to eliminate the fundamental causes of that crisis. Nevertheless, the old conflicts between parties and classes, which were chiefly nourished on the struggle between rival political and economic programmes, have been swept aside and put on an entirely different plane by Fascism, the chief item in the propaganda and ideology of which is not a concrete programme but a nebulous mythology expressed in symbols and fetishes of race and nation and accompanied by immediate aims of an unbridled demagogic nature. Although a political movement, Fascism succeeded from the first in avoiding the arena of struggle on which its opponents took their stand. On the latter it would easily have been beaten. Instead, without opposing programme to programme, without pledging itself to this or that organization of the state or of society, it successfully applied itself to discrediting politics in general and political parties and programmes in particular, thus reviving and transferring to the despised political scene many pre-logical and a-logical relics of primitive mentality which were slumbering in the masses and which the progress of civilization had covered with a thin exterior varnish without touching their deeper roots. This great political gamble on the most turbid psychological forces inherent in mass-man succeeded all the more easily because, as all the evidence shows, it was not the result of deliberate calculation on the part of the leaders, who were themselves far too much in the grip of irrational feelings to be aware of them.

**PROFESSOR PICKUP** What you consider to be relics of primitive mentality, Mr. Cynic, in reality constitute the inexhaustible source and fountain-head of mankind's religious feelings. There is no doubt in my mind that the wretched end of European Socialism was due to its vulgar materialist doctrines and its failure to acknowledge the noblest faculty of the human mind.

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THOMAS THE CYNIC Perhaps we shall discuss religion another time, professor. As for Socialism, it was not a metaphysical but a very real and concrete defeat that it suffered, and the real political significance of the victory of Fascist mysticism over Socialist 'materialism' can be seen when one considers that it has resulted in the apparent elimination of a number of vital problems which Socialism, for good or evil, represented, and their substitution by vague phrases and 'states of mind'. Those problems, however, were not arbitrary; they were not invented by the Socialists out of thin air, and hence they remain the fundamental factors underlying the general crisis of our time and, of course, powerfully influence Fascism itself, the only way of getting rid of concrete problems being to solve them and not to ignore them. It is, of course, true that the Socialists, with their eyes fixed on the class-struggle and on practical politics, were taken by surprise by the savage irruption of Fascism, failed to understand the reasons and consequences of its strange and unheard-of words and symbols, and did not for one moment imagine it possible that a movement of such a primitive nature might gain control of and manage a mechanism as complicated as the modern state. The Socialists were unprepared to understand the efficacy of Fascist propaganda because their doctrine was formulated by Marx and Engels in the nineteenth century, since when it has not made any great advances. In a passage in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* Marx rightly wrote that 'the tradition of the dead generations hangs like an incubus over the brains of the living', but he could not anticipate the discoveries of modern psychology concerning the structure of the human mind. For a Marxist of the past century it was still permissible to believe that the limitation of man's consciousness was a consequence of the division of society into classes and the economic exploitation resulting therefrom, and that the proletarian revolution, by emancipating the productive process from its last shackles, would also completely emancipate

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the human mind. Such a belief would seem puerile to-day; nevertheless, it is still carefully preserved in the intellectual baggage of every orthodox Marxist. Now it is to be expected that men's ways of feeling will undergo many future changes; but these will not suffice to modify man's psychological structure or to bring into consciousness the tangled mass of psychic activity that constitutes the unconscious. If the backwardness of Socialist theory in regard to man's internal life had had no practical consequences, it would not be worth while mentioning it now. It was, however, one of the reasons why the Socialists, and for that matter all the old parties, failed immediately to appreciate the danger of Fascist propaganda, and have so far fought it with arguments that strike into the void.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Do you mean, perhaps, that the irrational is stronger than the rational? And that to put the masses in motion one should always appeal to their primitive instincts and not to rational arguments? If so, you would agree with what the philosopher Huizinga said to us when we visited him in Holland: 'The crisis of our civilization,' he said, 'is the crisis of reason, the weakening of the critical faculty. There is a conflict between life and reason, and modern youth practises an idolatrous worship of life.'

THOMAS THE CYNIC I must confess that I am unaware of any struggle between the rational and irrational, between life and reason. Perhaps in this respect I am rather like a pedestrian who has a horror of travelling by air. I could not tell you at what atmospheric heights any such struggle takes place. The struggle between Fascism and Socialism in Italy and Germany, unlike the Trojan War in the *Iliad*, was not, so far as I am aware, accompanied by celestial rivalries and battles. Both in Italy and Germany, Fascist propaganda became effective as soon as the Socialist parties had shown themselves incapable of satisfying the concrete hopes of the masses. Let me give you an

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analogy. When an individual cannot face the difficulties of life and is incapable of realizing his practical aspirations he ends by taking refuge from his anguishes and desires in dreams. Similarly the masses, defeated as a result of the incapacity of their leaders in their efforts to do away with the present economic system, with its inevitable trial of crisis and of wars, seek refuge from the despair which would otherwise overtake them behind emblems of an epoch in which all social contradictions will have been 'symbolically' resolved, men will have become 'symbolically' brothers and capitalists' profits will have been 'symbolically' abolished.

MR. W. Do you really believe that fiction plays such an important role in Fascist ideology in Europe?

THOMAS THE GYNIC It plays an important role in every ideology, in every state system, Mr. W., but in authoritarian ideologies and states, its role is particularly important. Sir James Frazer has stated that one of the essential elements in the maintenance of public order and the authority of the state is invariably the superstitious fancies formed about it by the masses. Without that explanation, much human history would be unintelligible; wars, for instance, the existence of parasitic social classes, the relations between capital cities and colonies, and a good deal more. Fascism did not fall from the skies, and those whom it subjected were not free men, but mobs inclined by their very nature to serve, and educated by all the political parties to obey. The psychologist Bernheim claims to have proved that suggestibility is 'inherent in the human mind' and that the mental equipment of the average man is built up of 'successive suggestions'. The existence in man of this primitive tendency to submit to suggestion does not, however, mean that it cannot be overcome and made to give place to mental freedom and responsibility. But this is a disagreeable prospect to the majority of politicians, who like to use their fellow-men as docile tools; it is disagreeable to the latter too, because the

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lot of tame animals, even if it is not always enviable, is often the only alternative to starvation.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Would you do violence to human nature, Mr. Cynic? Please don't forget that intellectual freedom has always been the privilege of a restricted few, and presupposes a capacity for thought which the masses will never possess. The masses can only receive their mental nourishment in the form of pills, to be swallowed with their eyes shut.

THOMAS THE CYNIC We are talking about two entirely different things, professor. Education, even higher education, as has been amply demonstrated by experience, is not in itself incompatible with servility. But let us not stray too far from our subject. The point I wish to insist on now is that education, even higher education, is not incompatible with credulity and superstition. I know a learned professor of mathematics who trembles with fear if a black cat crosses his path on his way to the university. In his case it is a reflex action which he cannot prevent and laughs at as soon as the cat has disappeared. But the most dangerous superstitions are the common ones which we do not even notice as such. I would not be aware of many of them myself had they not been pointed out to me by a friend of mine from Papua. He belonged to one of the most backward tribes of Dutch New Guinea and was sent by a missionary to a *De Propaganda Fide* college in Rome to be emancipated from his native superstitions and given a Christian education. He was, however, an ungrateful pupil. In spite of his lively intelligence, he never raised any objections to the religious truths of the Bible and the Church, and he seemed ripe to be sent back to his tribe as a native missionary when chance or Providence willed it that one day, in the course of a visit to the Zoo of the Eternal City, his eyes fell upon a magnificent old kangaroo. Now the kangaroo was, and still is, the totemic animal of the tribe to which this young man belonged, and this sudden confrontation with his sacred ancestor in a foreign city produced an



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indescribable effect upon him. It was impossible for him to doubt that a supernatural agency had been at work. Obviously this was meant as a warning to him, to admonish him to remain faithful to his forebears. His Catholic masters, applying all the resources of Christian apologetics, sought to rescue their young convert from this reversion to superstition, but all their efforts were in vain; and finally they had to show him the door of the sacred college, where his presence had become a public scandal. Sad and disconsolate, he wandered from city to city, and one day I met him by chance at the Zurich Zoo, where he was watching the kangaroos in a state of great emotional excitement. We walked back to town together, and in the course of conversation I revealed some vague knowledge of the latest investigations of European anthropologists into the mythology of the remotest Australian and Papuan tribes. This made him flare up. 'I've read those people too!' he exclaimed. "Those so-called anthropologists of yours! They are absolute idiots, completely incapable of feeling the extraordinary and supernatural power of our totems, the black snake, the scarab, and the kangaroo. It can, of course, only be *felt*. They solemnly discuss our totems as though they were matters that could be discussed, but they are quite incapable of feeling things which every Papuan boy, and even every Papuan woman, takes for granted!" When his agitation was at its height he produced a notebook from his pocket and gave it to me to read, telling me that that was his revenge. He had called it 'The Incredible Superstitions of the Backward European Tribes'. This title pleased me so much that I read it all through at a sitting. He turned out to be an acute observer of the customs of old Europe, his virgin eyes revealing to him innumerable fetishes, idols, totems and taboos that preside over the most important acts of our collective life, I might say practically without our being aware of them. I have never seen a more radical or irrefutable criticism of our present civilization. The picture was painted

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unsystematically and in anecdotic form; he merely described his discoveries in the order in which they were made. As you can well imagine, the whole Catholic liturgy, with its incense, candles, unguents, ashes, relics and sacraments, was given the place of honour. But there were plenty of curious observations of our private lives. I remember in particular a highly involved discussion between the Papuan and a Roman lady who had a golden wedding ring on her finger. After questioning her about why she wore it, the young man had passed on to discussing the relations between wedding rings and conjugal fidelity, the *Propaganda Fide* institution and the idea of faithfulness to one's country. In the end the poor woman was left bewildered and speechless. One day he was taken with the rest of the college to the Piazza Venezia to render homage at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, situated at the foot of the 'altar of the fatherland'. 'Is the fatherland a madonna too?' he asked a superior. 'No,' was the reply. 'Then why is there an altar to it?' 'That is something you cannot understand.' 'Why not?' Carabinieri came up and told him to hush. 'If I have to hush it must be because the fatherland is a madonna too,' he went on muttering. Another day he had noted: 'I read in a paper that in Abyssinia the Roman wolf has driven out the Lion of Judah. It seems that the British Lion betrayed the Lion of Judah. As with us at home, every big European tribe venerates a totemic ancestor; France has the cock, Germany the eagle, Italy also the eagle, Rome a she-wolf with a litter of two cubs, while Holland, Belgium, Sweden and many other countries have the lion, which seems to be the most common animal in Europe.' On another occasion he was present at the launching of a ship. 'Excursion to the sea,' he noted. 'Christening of a big canoe. A lady breaks a bottle against the canoe's side. They tell me it was a bottle of champagne. "What a pity," I remark, "it would be better to drink the champagne and break a bottle of water over the canoe." In that case the christening would not be valid, they

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told me. I pointed out that Jesus was baptized with water. They said I was a fool. I asked whether a canoe had a soul. "No," they replied. "What is it then that is being christened?" I asked. They said I was a bigger fool.' Another day he wrote: "To-day I watched a lot of men marching. They were all dressed in the same way. In front of them walked a man carrying a pole to which a piece of cloth was attached. Everyone saluted it respectfully. One old man even wept. One man who did not take his hat off was set upon and beaten. I asked why. I was told he did not salute the flag. "But it is only a piece of wood with some cloth attached to it," I pointed out. "The flag," someone shouted, shaking his fist at me, "is the sacred symbol of the country." "It is the country's blood and soul!" somebody else shouted, drawing a knife. "Has the country a soul?" I asked. At that they wanted to take me to prison.' Other incidents he described referred to the magic power of stamps, uniforms, emblems, and so on, and I shall not tell you of them now because you already know them very well, though being so used to them, one ends by paying no more attention to them.

MR. W. Your Papuan story is at least entertaining, even if it isn't true.

THOMAS THE CYNIC I found the following passage in a study by the ethnographer A. P. Elkin of the secret life of the Australian aborigines:

The tie between a person and his country is not merely geographical and fortuitous; it is a vital, spiritual and sacred tie. His country is the symbol of the way of access to the invisible and powerful world of heroes and ancestors and the powers who dispense the life of which man and nature profit.

I warned you in advance that this passage applied to Australian aborigines, who are entirely out of touch with so-called civilization, lest you should think it referred to the slogans of Nazi propaganda. Nevertheless there is a difference between the mental

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attitudes of the Nazis and the natives of Australia in this respect, and it is entirely to the advantage of the latter. In their case the mystical contact they maintain with the forces of nature is genuine and spontaneous, while in the case of the contemporary Germans it was imposed by the suggestive power of a nebulous ideology, the success of which is to be attributed to the terrible state of spiritual bewilderment through which the German people passed during the post-War years.

MR. W. Propaganda, however able it may be, cannot be successful unless historical reality offers it some pretext. The primeval German forest was effective propaganda in Germany, and the Roman tradition was similarly effective in Italy, because both were backed by still-living traditions that were far older than either democracy or Liberalism. But in America we lack all tradition. Our history begins with the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Before then the thirteen states were British colonies. Hence our brief history is entirely Liberal. If you consider that in 1776 the United States had barely two million inhabitants (and the War of Independence caused a number of leading families to leave the country and return to England) and that the population to-day is one hundred and thirty millions, it is clear that so far as its population is concerned the United States is a creation of the Liberal epoch, and a recent creation at that. A national tradition is not created under such conditions.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Do you really believe the Roman tradition exists in Italy, Mr. W.? I assure you that exactly the opposite is the case. A few years ago there was a discussion among Italian historians concerning the date of the origins of the present Italian nation. Some put it at the beginning of the nineteenth century, others favoured the eighteenth century, others even went back to the Trecento and Dante. Fascism was then in power, and naturally there is no lack of Fascist historians, but not a single one of them, Fascist or otherwise, had the

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courage to maintain that the history of Italy begins with classical antiquity. The survival of the Roman tradition in Italy is the shecrest nonsense, but that did not prevent Mussolini from making it the central myth of Fascist ideology and drawing on it for titles, symbols and rites for the Fascist Party organization and the Fascist state. Young men have volunteered for service in Africa and Spain and laid down their lives for the sake of the Roman tradition. It was not a 'call of the blood' that made them do it, but the suggestive power of Fascist propaganda.

MR. W. But there must be some element of plausibility if a deception is to take place. There is at least a geographical correspondence between the Italy of to-day and the Rome of the Caesars. In American we have nothing equivalent.

THOMAS THE CYNIC How do you explain the recent anti-semitic campaign undertaken by the Fascists in Italy? Is there anything in Italian tradition which would have led you to expect it? Nevertheless, the Fascist propagandists found it the easiest thing in the world to substitute glorification of the barbarian invasions of the declining Roman Empire for their previous exaltation of the Mediterranean origins of the Italic peoples. The substitution of the Nordic Myth for the Mediterranean Myth was casier than anyone would have imagined. Why? If a deception is to take place, the first condition, Mr. W., is that its victim should be in the necessary state of receptivity. The contents of the suggestion and the character of its practitioner obviously have their importance, but both are only secondary. The really important thing is the victim's state of mind. In the last analysis all suggestion is auto-suggestion. That is the answer to those who, having studied the Nazi and Fascist leaders at close quarters and discovered their intellectual and moral limitations, are unable to understand how such mediocrities could create such powerful mass movements. It was not they who created the movements; in reality it was they who reaped the benefit of them. The secret of Fascism and

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National-Socialism must be sought in the first place in the mental state to which the Italian and German masses were reduced as a consequence of the war, the economic crisis, and the failure of the Socialist parties. A Nazi propagandist, Dietrich, unknowingly admitted as much when he wrote:

One experience we had. Trust in the Führer grew strongest and gripped the whole people in those parts of Germany where economic and moral distress was greatest and seemed most intolerable.

MR. W. Please let us not forget the practical object of our conversations. What consequences do you draw for me from all this, Mr. Cynic? That is what interests me.

THOMAS THE CYNIC The most important consequence for you, Mr. W., is this. Do not fall into the sin of pride. Do not believe that it is the function of a Fascist leader to create Fascism out of nothing. Rather place your trust in the impotence of the old parties to overcome the crisis of civilization which mankind seems to have entered upon. Do not forget that in all probability we are barely at the beginning of a long series of wars, revolutions, counter-revolutions and economic disasters. Therefore do not be in a hurry. Put your trust in mankind's possible return to barbarism, and do not be discouraged. Even without a great historical tradition behind them, the masses can easily return to barbarism with the potent aid of war and famine. Heaven forbid that I should cast doubts on the wisdom of Professor Pickup and your other colleagues, Mr. W., but when it comes to really stupefying the masses, without the decisive intervention of wholesale massacres and prolonged distress the efforts of the best propagandists will be as ineffectual as the buzzing of a lot of flies. Please do not be shocked if I call things by their right names. For the sake of clarity I speak with the utmost frankness. It is now an established fact that as a consequence of international wars, civil wars and prolonged unemployment a wave, an epidemic of psychological degeneration

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occurs, a process by which an ever-increasing number of individuals cease to function normally. A gradual atrophy of their higher mental qualities takes place, and at the same time a gradual hypertrophy of their lower mental faculties, the simple, automatic ones. I am not speaking now of the serious cases which require actual psychiatric intervention, but of ex-servicemen and unemployed generally, and their families, and all those who have been subjected to intense emotions for a long time. Save in exceptional cases, experience has shown that men's internal equilibrium cannot survive such superhuman ordeals. They oscillate between black despair and naive optimism, and fall an easy prey to every demagogic phrase. Physical insecurity and uncertainty about their livelihood, if protracted for years, lead even the most normal, most cultured, best educated men back into a state of primitive anxiety, a state that after many centuries of development seemed definitely to have been superseded. That, Mr. W., is the state of grace in which Fascists are formed; not the drawing-room Fascists, but the real Fascists, the desperate ones, whose sole presence at a meeting of their opponents is sufficient to cause terror and panic.

PROFESSOR PICKUP What you say, Mr. Cynic, reminds me of some words of the Spaniard Ortega y Gasset, whom we met in Paris.

The man who is now beginning to come to the top — he said to us — is, in comparison with the complex civilization in which he was born, a primitive, a barbarian, a man who emerges from the cellar, a vertical invader. He is in fact a different kind of man, a man who can act only in a group, in a word a mass-man.

The mobilization of millions of mass-men by means of Fascism is nevertheless not the whole of Fascism. At most it may explain some noisy aspects of the movement, but the essence of Fascism is in its idea. Mass man is the brute force which the Fascist idea uses in order to triumph. The two things must not be confused.

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To state it in strictly scientific terms, masses are masses, but ideas are ideas.

MR. W. Why do you insist on wasting our time? You know very well that there are plenty of ideas everywhere in America, but not in politics.

PROFESSOR PICKUP My dear Mr. W., once more let me repeat that that is the whole trouble. It is the very thing we must fight against and put an end to. Without ideas our country will remain throughout the ages the picturesque hotchpotch it has hitherto been. I believe the hour is approaching predestined by fate to be the beginning of a new era; when America will cease to be a vast, unco-ordinated patchwork and will for the first time become a real, ordered and stable society. That miracle can only be accomplished by the Fascist idea, shining as a bright light to show the way to millions of mass-men. Only the Fascist idea can give a solid and unshakeable foundation to the shallow nationalism of America. Instead of seeking ephemeral success, of the kind achieved by the Townsend movement, we must have the courage to place the real problem before the forum of public opinion, that of the organization of the state. A discussion of the social order and the structure of the state . . .

THOMAS THE CYNIC Let me warn you, professor, that you are on the wrong track. In reality Fascism is an attempt to put the social order beyond discussion, to remove it from the fluctuations of public opinion. For Fascism society is eternal; it is there when the individual is born and remains there after he is dead. The individual must adapt himself to society, and not the reverse. In this sense European Fascism is an attempt to bring the relations between the individual and society back to the state they were in two centuries ago. Prior to the eighteenth century, the Age of Enlightenment, the social organism as a whole was not a subject of dispute. But then men turned their attention to the problem of society itself. The period of political and social rationalizations began, the period of programmes.



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Liberalism, democracy and Socialism were born, with all their varieties, each one of them representing a different conception of the relations between men. It seemed that reason had definitely displaced tradition. It was, however, a purely platonic and decorative reign. In the nineteenth century society continued its intemperate evolution and development, obeying laws other than those of reason. That evolution and development, was, however, itself the object of fresh discussion, giving birth to still more programmes, and no one was any the worse for them. This went on until the Great War created a situation in which discussion became dangerous. The old social order was revealed as rationally indefensible. Then Fascism emerged. It emerged from the anxiety of the middle classes, whose social existence was threatened by technical progress; from the disillusionment of the workers after the defeat of their ill-organized revolutionary attempts; from the fear of the capitalists, over whom there hung the menace of expropriation. Fascism did not come forward with a new programme to compete with the already existing programmes; it did not even criticize its opponents' programmes. It took up a position outside the arena of discussion, and denied that society was a legitimate subject for discussion. Against the 'corrupting' reason of the politicians it appealed to the primitive instincts, to the voice of blood; it appealed to tradition, to the mysticism of the sheep-fold, 'to the need for believing in a leader', to loyalty, to solidarity in the face of danger, to 'salvation in obedience', to 'the nobility of sacrifice' to 'brotherhood dictated by destiny . . .'

MR. W. According to what you say, Mr. Cynic, it seems to me now that Fascism in my country will be confronted with one very easy and one very difficult task. America, as you know, never had an Age of Enlightenment and was therefore spared Socialism and the struggle of political ideologies. If the economic experiments of the present President fail, it will not be difficult to persuade my fellow-citizens that they were the

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victims of political ideology. 'Down with politics!' will therefore be a very popular slogan, and will please everybody, the workers, the farmers and the trusts. I may confess to you that I see the whole of my political future tied to that happy combination. Nevertheless, I wonder whether it will only be a flash in the pan. To get into power will not be difficult. But to remain there? It is not possible to entrench oneself behind a national tradition where no such thing exists, and to create a mythology for a people of such varied origins as the Americans. You are perhaps aware that all those who believe that Fascism is impossible in America base their arguments on our peculiar national psychology.

THOMAS THE CYNIC The people who believe that are literary men, and notions of national psychology are largely literary, Mr. W. Don't forget that before Fascism came into power in Italy there were many who maintained that it was incompatible with our rebellious national temperament. In Germany they contrasted the crudity of Hitler with the enormous German contribution to poetry and philosophy, and said that Fascism was impossible too. Before 1933 one often heard a phrase that might have been borrowed from our friend Professor Pickup's Neo-Sociology. That phrase was 'Germany is not Italy'. From 1933 to 1938 the phrase was 'Austria is not Germany'. One must bear in mind that even the most firmly-established national tradition has only surface roots in the psychology of the average individual. These are the first to give way under the strain of the profound spiritual crisis which makes Fascism possible. Professor Pickup does not believe me, but he will believe Hitler, who has recognized as much on various occasions.

The impetus towards the most tremendous revolutionary changes in this world — he wrote in *Mein Kampf* — consisted at all times less in scientific knowledge guiding the masses than in the drive of an inspiring fanaticism, sometimes an actual hysteria.

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No country has a tradition or national psychology rendering Fascism inevitable, Mr. W., and similarly no country has a tradition or national psychology rendering it impossible. The influence of national psychology on the growth of Fascism is purely decorative, and may serve to distinguish, say German Fascism from Jewish Fascism (for Jewish Fascism exists too!) or Italian Fascism from the French or Irish varieties; but underneath these purely superficial diversities there is invariably a common social and political denominator and a common psychological denominator. It is true that in every Fascist ideology you will find myths borrowed from national tradition, but their effectiveness is solely due to the fact that they are conceived of and felt by the masses as symbols of primitive complexes. These complexes are also found in men entirely devoid of national tradition, being relics of a time in which nations did not even exist, and very probably they will continue to exist even after the nations of the present day have disappeared. Professor Pickup is almost certainly aware that modern psychology has discovered that the content of the dreams of negroes does not differ from that of the dreams of Europeans or Indians. That is a vital fact for you, Mr. W. The hundred and thirty million citizens of America come from many different countries and show much diversity in ordinary, workaday, waking life, but at night they are simply men, dreaming the same dreams and oppressed by the same nightmares. A national tradition is entirely superfluous. When all the other necessary social and political conditions exist, those dreams and nightmares will be the raw material from which the American Fascist ideology will be created.

MR. W. If I have understood you rightly, I cannot help concluding that America is Fascism's Promised Land. In the past century there has been no lack of premonitory signs. Have you ever heard of the cider election of 1840, Mr. Cynic? A man without a programme but with a romantic mind conquered

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the country, travelling from place to place in a log cabin on a large wagon, with a barrel of hard cider on tap for the crowd.

**PROFESSOR PICKUP** The contempt for the masses that your words betray is justified, my friends. But if you put the leaders on the same level as the masses, I entirely disagree with you. Your true leader is skilled at manipulating primitive formulas in order to set the masses in motion, but he needs a clear programme in order to give them direction. I could give you innumerable quotations from my 'Breviary of Fascist Thought', but I hope a few only will suffice to convince you.

The masses — Mussolini wrote — are nothing but a herd. They are the prey of supine, fragmentary and incoherent impulses. They are nothing but raw material. The altars erected by Demos to Their Holinesses the Masses must therefore be struck down. This does not mean that the masses' well-being must be neglected. On the contrary, one may recall that Nietzsche desired that the masses should have all the material well-being possible, so that they should not disturb the higher manifestations of the spirit with their complaints and tumults.

The spirit, gentlemen, is at work even when it does not show itself in the street. Hitler has defined the idea as 'the pole-star of searching humanity'. The masses must be given something other than dry arguments. Hitler said in one of his speeches that it was necessary to create

a new faith for the great searching and erring masses, which would not desert them in this time of bewilderment, a faith by which they could swear and build.

It would therefore be wrong to see something tyrannical and blind in the relations between leader and led. Everyone has his own function. The function of the masses is instinct, that of the leader is clear sight. Nevertheless, the path is a common one.

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For the remarkable thing about all great reforms — Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf* — is that at first they have only one single champion, though many millions of supporters. Their goal has often been the deepest, most heart-felt aspiration of hundreds of thousands for centuries, until someone has come forward as its herald and standard-bearer, and helped it forward to victory clothed in a new idea.

Is this a peculiarity of Fascism or National-Socialism? Not at all. Goebbels stated in his *Signale der neuen Zeit*:

History shows that the greatest world movements have always arisen when the leaders have been able to unite their fellows on a quite simple and easily intelligible point.

It is true that Marx claimed to give a scientific basis to the Socialist movement, and the latter may even have been of some use to the Socialist leaders, but even the Socialists have always used simple and primitive slogans to set the masses in motion. The German Communist Clara Zetkin says in one of her books that she once asked Lenin if he did not believe that the illiteracy of the Russian peasants had aided the victory of Bolshevism, and Lenin promptly agreed. Fundamentally Fascism behaves in the same way.

We had no intention — Goebbels wrote in *Wesen und Gestalt des Nationalsozialismus* — of basing our views on a scientific foundation. Our object was to put them into practice. Posterity will recognize our ideas from our deeds, and not the reverse.

The achievements of Fascism in Europe are already so tremendous that there is abundant material for its scientific justification. I am convinced that in every country in which a Fascist party takes the field in future it will appeal not only to the instinct of the masses but also to the scientific clarity that results from experience. Corporativism, for example, is a

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system of the organization of production the superiority of which can be scientifically demonstrated. Fascism showed signs of uncertainty at first, and it has proceeded experimentally in various fields, but it discovered its characteristic institutions in the end. Why should we refuse to deduce scientific principles from Fascism's actual achievements and why should we not adopt them as our programme? Why should we not have this programme publicly discussed? We should not, of course, admit the masses to our discussions, but only the more intelligent sort of people. Why should we not show that our programme is in harmony with experience and reason?

THOMAS THE CYNIC Have you really such a programme?

MR. W. Yes. Why conceal it? It was worked out by a committee of learned dons, presided over by Professor Pickup. It is a very long programme. To be perfectly frank, I have not yet finished it.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Then don't finish it, Mr. W., unless you wish to ruin your career, and don't allow it to be printed and distributed.

MR. W. That committee cost me a small fortune, Mr. Cynic. The programme is complete and paid for. Why shouldn't I have it printed?

THOMAS THE CYNIC Because it would be a fatal blow to your movement, Mr. W. Write off the expenses as donations to charity, or funds misapplied, or something, but tear that programme up. That's the only way of cutting your losses. To try discussing or persuading would be madness. The last thing a Fascist leader must appeal to is the critical faculty of his audience, for he would be its first victim. A Fascist leader must inspire his own followers and the people with distrust, hatred and contempt for those who discuss. Everything a Fascist leader says must be presented under the irresistible guise of the obvious. 'It is so because it is so, and it cannot be otherwise.' All doubt is excluded, and there is nothing to discuss.

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Since you have compiled a 'Breviary of Fascist Thought', add this to it, professor. The Nazi Wilhelm Stapel says in his book *Christentum und Nationalsozialismus*:

Since National-Socialism is an *elemental* movement, it cannot be met with 'arguments'. Arguments would only be effective if the movement had grown great through arguments.

Fascism claims to fulfil the same spiritual needs as religion, a new religion that requires the greatest sacrifices from its proselytes. 'Do not overlook the religious features of our movement, which is characterized by the highest moral qualities of man, by sacrifice, by devotion, by righteous indignation', the Nazi Feder declared in a speech in the Reichstag. 'In turning the Jews and money-changers out of the Temple we shall regard ourselves as the best followers of the Saviour.' Hadamowsky stated in *Propaganda und Nationale Macht*:

Political propaganda preaches faith; that is its essence. Our people yearns for political life to have an inner meaning, it longs for a political confession of faith, and is ready greedily to accept it.

And Goebbels stated in his *Signale der neuen Zeit*:

Millions are ready to die for a gospel, and our movement becomes more of a gospel every day. We cannot be silenced with the argument that National-Socialism is a political creed, a political confession of faith, for that is what it is.

No prophet has ever discussed his own mission. If a Fascist leader started discussing, it would show he did not know what Fascism was. Let me give you an example from the recent history of this little country. A few years ago, as a repercussion of the Fascist triumphs in Italy and Germany, an embryonic Fascist movement started in Switzerland. After a noisy beginning, it rapidly faded out. Primarily its failure was due to

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the absence in this country of the peculiar political and social conditions which are the essential background of any serious radical movement, whether of the Left or of the Right. The failure of Swiss Fascism was accelerated, however, by the fact that from the beginning its leaders were of the Professor Pickup type, and believed it possible to spread Fascism on the basis of public discussions with Socialist, democratic and liberal opponents. The results were invariably disastrous, though I must add that probably those unfortunates had no other choice. In view of this country's age-long democratic education, if a political leader declines to engage in public controversy with his opponents, he promptly discredits himself in the eyes of public opinion and most probably finds himself with no supporters. Demagogy in this country is made still more difficult by the people's scant sympathy for eloquence and fine phrases. But, fortunately for Fascism, not all the democratic countries are like Switzerland, and in the majority of them, if eloquence and fine phrases were suppressed, where would democracy be? Involved in this attempt to smuggle Fascism into Switzerland were plenty of studious youths who, like Professor Pickup, set themselves the task of formulating a theory of Fascism from a study of the state institutions created in recent times in Italy and Germany. But theirs was an error typical of intellectuals, who, faithful to the saying that intellectuality and intelligence are quite distinct, allow themselves to be readily attracted by the formal and strictly juridical aspect of political phenomena. It is the fault of this kind of intellectual that democracy has become synonymous with parliamentarianism, and Bolshevism with soviets, even where parliamentarianism has destroyed democracy and Bolshevism the soviets. But let us leave these things aside, for they do not concern us now. As for Fascism, fix this well in your mind, Mr. W. There can be Fascism without national traditions, and there can also be Fascism without corporations. The essence of Fascism does not lie in any of



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the institutions it may create in one country or may not create in another. Hitler stated this clearly in a speech he made to the Bavarian monarchists in the spring of 1922:

The state form arises from the intimate nature of a people, from necessities that are so elementary and powerful that in days to come they will be understood by every single individual, if only Germany is once united and free.

A year later he came out for a 'real German people's state', that 'would be first the German republic' even if 'an emperor or a king were to be at its head'. Fascism is compatible with a monarchy or a republic, with a parliament or with corporations. Institutions have no value by themselves, but only according to the regimes in which they flourish, and in a Fascist state everything is Fascist. The only thing with which Fascism cannot be reconciled is clear ideas, and since these do not grow by themselves, like grass on the hillside, but are always the result of discussion between thinking persons, the only thing with which Fascism is incompatible is discussion. You must avoid discussion, Mr. W., like the devil holy water.

MR. W. And if I am challenged to a discussion and invited to give my opinion on an important question?

THOMAS THE CYNIC You will reply that no one can prevent you from fulfilling the mission entrusted to you by destiny.

MR. W. And if they ask me what my mission is?

THOMAS THE CYNIC You will reply that it is to save the country. 'The country must and will be saved', you will say. 'Nothing will prevent me from saving my country. No one can oppose destiny. That, brothers, is my mission.'

MR. W. And if they ask me details about my mission?

THOMAS THE CYNIC You will reply: 'My mission is to save the country. Destiny has entrusted me with that mission', and you can add that that is all you have to say to politicians, because your mission will be accomplished among the masses.

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PROFESSOR PICKUP I haven't heard anything so absurd for a long time. Do you seriously maintain that Fascism has achieved power anywhere by behaving in such a fashion?

THOMAS THE CYNIC I do. Mind you, Fascist leaders have not always resisted the temptation of engaging in controversy, and have not always refrained from putting forward political ideas and even practical proposals for reforms. It was not thanks to these, however, that they triumphed. The latter are the most ephemeral of their writings, and are of no interest or value now, except to instruct the reader about fleeting moments in the development of Fascism. In Mussolini's writings you will find the most contradictory statements even on such matters as the fundamental conception of the state.

Down with the state in all its forms and all its incarnations; the state of yesterday, of to-day and of to-morrow, the bourgeois state and the Socialist state. Nothing is left for us, the last survivors of individualism, if we are to pass through the present night and that of to-morrow, save the absurd but always consolatory religion of Anarchism.

That is what he wrote in April 1920. In August 1922, he wrote that

the century of democracy is finished. An aristocratic century, our century, succeeds the last. The state of the many ends by again becoming the state of the few. The new generations forbid democracy to encumber the path to the future with its cadaverous mass.

After the conquest of power he sounded a different note.

For Fascism — he wrote — the state is the absolute, before which individuals and groups are only relative.

Such was the end of the parabola. I hope no one will dare to try to explain Mussolini's success by the clarity of his ideas on the subject of the state. Hitler's attitude to the state differs from that of Mussolini. 'The state is a means to an end,' according

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to Hitler. 'That end is the maintenance of the race.' But these are purely verbal differences, by which the actual totalitarian character of the two states is in no way affected. In every other political ideology the thing of fundamental importance is the conception of the state. But in Fascist ideology of the period prior to the conquest of power it is of only secondary importance. Contradictory statements are made about it, and it is spoken of in vague, mythological terms. Rosenberg in *Blut und Ehre* defined National-Socialism as 'a movement of the people based on a new and yet ancient and long-established conception of blood-value'. The blood-myth is 'the secret harmony between blood and soul'. Being secret, it is unanswerable. In the eyes of the faithful there is a supernatural quality about the atmosphere in which the mysteries are celebrated. 'It is almost a transcendental world in which Hitler day by day fulfils his work for Germany,' Dietrich wrote. Mussolini for his part declared that 'we wish to save the values'. He did not explain what values, so everyone could think that they referred to himself. 'We are against renunciations, we are for our rights.' 'We are opposed to irresponsibility.' Has there ever been anyone who was in favour of irresponsibility? The vaguer the formulas adopted by Fascist propaganda, the more effective they have turned out to be. In Fascist propaganda words are used not for their rational significance but for the images they are capable of calling up.

MR. W. By the way, what does the cry '*eid! eid! alalà!*' mean?

THOMAS THE CYNIC Nothing whatever. It was invented by D'Annunzio during the War. You will not find the words in any language or in any dialect, and even their inventor never attributed any rational meaning to them. Hence they had all the requisite qualities to become one of the sacred formulas of the Fascist liturgy. When they are yelled by an excited crowd they immediately take on an emotional significance, and can express stupor, ecstasy, supplication, prayer, or a desire for self-

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immolation, according to circumstances. Words such as these are far more valuable to a Fascist movement than any theoretical treatise on corporations. The very fact that they are nearly always made up of meaningless sounds is an impressive reminder of what the cries of the cavemen must have been like. You will have noticed yourselves that when shouted by a crowd *alalà!* dissolves into a prolonged 'ah!' 'a noi!' into a prolonged 'oh!' *heil!* into a prolonged 'ah!' 'Ah!' and 'Oh!' are the most elementary sounds. They are the first that are made by babies, and escape involuntarily from everyone to express pain or admiration. 'Alalà! a noi!' or 'Heil!' are the liturgical formulas that begin and end every Fascist demonstration, and it is they that enshrine the significance and guarantee the efficacy of the rite. In the leader's mouth they acquire a magical significance. When Mussolini cries 'eìd! eìd!' or Hitler 'Heil!' at a Fascist demonstration a tremor runs through the audience as at the announcement of salvation. The Buddhist formula 'Oh jewel of the lotus', and the litanies of Christianity have never exercised more potency. The solemn recitation of unintelligible texts has always been a valuable resource of all religions. Sybilline language, by the mere fact of being incomprehensible, has always given believers the illusion of revealed truth, and the use of Latin has never discouraged illiterate peasants from attending Catholic services; on the contrary, it has always helped to attract them.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Do you suppose that Marx's *Capital* would have been so popular if it had been written in more intelligible language?

THOMAS THE CYNIC The saying *credo quia absurdum*, I believe because it is absurd, indicates a very widespread tendency among mankind; indeed, it is the same as their tendency to suggestion. No party, of course, has ever declined to exploit that human weakness, but Fascism has founded all its fortunes on it, creating a special modern technique for hypnotizing the masses.

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MR. W. In Berlin, we met a certain Dr. Guterer, who is grand master of the ceremonies for the Nazis' public demonstrations. After talking to him I realized why the German churches and theatres are often deserted now. Choreography has been transplanted to the market-place.

THOMAS THE CYNIC The symbols and fetishes of the new idolatry also belong to the market-place; the eagles, the swastikas, the lictor's fasces, and the banners. Napoleon said, 'Give me a button and I will make men die for it'. Experience has shown that that is perfectly possible. Every Fascist or Nazi carries his party emblem in his buttonhole, and is ready to give his life for it. The button serves to assure him of the supernatural power that it enshrines. It serves to distinguish the Fascist from other men, and assures him of his superiority over those unfortunates who do not possess it. Stories are told of Fascists who have kissed it at the point of death. Others are buried with it, as a pledge of security against the infernal powers. Others touch the brow of their new-born sons with it, so that they may grow up devoted to their country. The strength of Fascism is manifested at magical ceremonies in which the whole people takes part. A new flag ceases to be a pole with a piece of cloth attached to it when the Leader's deputy touches it with his fingers; the new party premises ceases to be an ordinary house when the Leader's deputy declares it open. For the poor, unfortunate people who are the victims of all this the symbol ends by being confused with the thing it stands for. The flag no longer represents the country, it *is* the country, just as the Consecrated Host does not represent the body and the blood of Christ but *is* the body and the blood of Christ. All attempts to explain the efficacy of a fetish by its shape or colour are futile. The strength of a fetish derives solely from the minds of those who worship it. The Nazi flag is big and red, and the Italian Fascist flag is small and black, but they fulfil the same function with the same result.

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PROFESSOR PICKUP Why were their opponents' symbols less effective?

THOMAS THE GYNIC The use of symbols by the Socialist and democratic parties is accompanied by an ideology that hinders, or at any rate does not help, their transformation into fetishes. In the worker's eyes Socialism stands for concrete things — his wages, his factory, his home. In his case his flag simply remains his flag. In Russia, however, the Soviet flag has become a fetish too. The process corresponded with the gradual liquidation of the soviets. However, even if the other parties, in spite of their different ideologies, did possess symbols of fetishistic value, they were systematically derided by the Fascists and dishonoured in the eyes of the masses. That is why the Italian Fascists used castor oil upon their opponents. They regarded the flowing black tie worn by many Italian Socialists as a crude materialization of the anti-patriotic idea, and, when circumstances permitted, the black tie was seized and burned, and its impure wearer was forced to submit to a huge dose of castor oil, sometimes having to swallow as much as a litre of the stuff and remain in the public square until it had produced its effect. Thus did the Fascists eliminate the evil from the bodies of their opponents. These practices, like Fascist fetishism and mythology in general, were naturally only effective because of the nervousness and discouragement to which the masses were reduced as a consequence of the war, the economic crisis and the failure of the Socialist attempts at revolution. The new saviour presents himself to the masses in the guise of a new kind of demagogue, surrounded by the symbols and fetishes of patriotic mythology, eagles, swastikas, lictor's fasces, flags and banners, and with torches flaring in the breeze. He is not generally a great orator, and seems to be ignorant of the most elementary rules of the traditional art of public speaking; in some ways he reminds one of a war propagandist haranguing soldiers before going over the top, in others of the exact opposite, the raw

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leader of a band of mutinous soldiers. However, his vehement and uncultured improvisations serve to bring him closer to the masses, who end by hearing their own voice in him. There really is a Fascist kind of eloquence, false and artificial like every other. But when used upon masses who have known war and prolonged unemployment it is infinitely more effective than the old 'operatic' eloquence of Gambetta, Jaurès, Lassalle, Enrico Ferri, Lloyd George. It is superior to the old in the way in which Al Jolson is superior to Caruso. Fascist eloquence is reinforced by the technique of Fascist propaganda, but it would be presumption on my part to talk of propaganda to Americans. . . .

MR. W. Not for that reason. But it is very late, and if we are not careful we shall be too late for dinner.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Then I must say good-bye. In any case you will not miss very much if I do not give you my comments on the technique of Fascist propaganda. As a matter of fact I have not very much to say about it, the Germans in particular having dealt with it liberally in their writings, as of a thing which has no secrets. I therefore leave with you a selection of Nazi quotations on the technique of propaganda, so that you may look through them if you feel inclined.

### DEUS EX MACHINA

'Flaming protests and mass meetings are certainly valuable and possibly indispensable for the creation of exaltation. But if there is not a man who will take effective action behind it all, all these things remain ineffectual' (*Die Memoiren des Stabchef Roehm*, page 80).

The controlling intelligence must be that of a 'propagandist, organizer, speaker, writer'. HIS greatness is 'that he is politician and propagandist at the same time, while the others are neither politicians nor understand anything of propaganda' (GOEBBELS, 9.1.28, *Signale der neuen Zeit*, page 42).

'As the great teacher of the German race he surrounded himself with a band of active, agile and fanatical propagandists' (HADAMOWSKY, *Propaganda und nationale Macht*, page 42).

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'No great political acts can find an echo in the masses to-day without the direct personal intervention of the speaker' (Ibid., page 43). 'There is no difference between the speaker and the politician' (GOEBBELS, 9.1.28, *Signale der neuen Zeit*, page 49).

At the Munich high treason trial, February-March, 1924. 'It was not out of modesty that I wished to be a drummer. That is my highest aim. The rest is of minor importance' (OLDEN's *Hitler*, page 76, German edition).

### A MAGIC ART

The function of propaganda is 'to inspire men to die' (HITLER, *Mein Kampf*, page 202).

'When Hitler speaks, all opposition collapses at the magic effect of his words' (GOEBBELS, 19.11.28, *Der Angriff*, page 217).

'Propaganda must be developed into a statesmanlike art' (GOEBBELS, *Vom Kaiserhof zur Reichskanzlei*, page 140).

Mass demonstrations must 'burn into the little man's soul the proud conviction that though a little worm he is nevertheless part of a great dragon' (HITLER, *Mein Kampf*, page 529).

'He who controls public opinion is right. He who is right achieves power' (GOEBBELS, 2.9.29, *Der Angriff*, page 197).

Goebbels notes in his diary on 4.9.32: 'If we wish to keep the party intact, we must once more appeal to primitive mass instincts' (*Vom Kaiserhof zur Reichskanzlei*, page 157).

'The force which has set great historical avalanches of a religious or political nature in motion has always been the magic power of the spoken word' (HITLER, *Mein Kampf*, page 116).

'The overwhelming eloquence of a dominating apostle' is required (page 532). The speaker 'will always allow himself to be so influenced by the masses that he will instinctively find the words he needs to speak to the hearts of his audience' (Ibid., page 527).

'False ideas and mistaken views can be corrected by instruction, but errors of feeling never. Only an appeal to the secret forces can be effective over the latter . . . and practically only the speaker is capable of it' (pages 527-8). The success of Marxism was based on the fact that its 'popular speakers hammered things home among the masses and gained a miraculous knowledge of the human material' (Ibid., page 529).

'Just as a man's religious denomination is the result of education, his religious instinct being dormant within him all the while, so are



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the political opinions of the masses only the final result of a sometimes quite incredibly difficult process of hewing minds and souls into shape' (Ibid., page 12).

From this it follows 'that the correct application of propaganda is a real art' (page 193). It is 'only a weapon, though a truly terrible one in the hands of the expert' (page 196) and 'only those with the most brilliant knowledge of human nature are good enough to wield it' (page 199).

It is a fact 'that by the skilful and persistent application of propaganda a people can be made to believe that heaven is hell or that the greatest wretchedness is paradise' (page 302).

'Propaganda must be adapted to the masses in form and content, and the sole standard by which it is to be judged is its effectiveness' (Ibid., page 376).

### THE TASKS OF PROPAGANDA

1 'That propaganda is good which leads to success' (GOEBBELS, 9.1.28, *Signale der neuen Zeit*, page 28.)

† 'Propaganda need not have standards but it must lead to the goal' (Ibid., page 48).

'Thus no one can say, your propaganda is too crude, too common or too brutal, or not decent enough, because propaganda is not to be judged by such standards. Propaganda should not be decent, neither should it be gentle or soft or mild; it should lead to success' (Ibid., page 29).

'Propaganda is not on a par with political or war-like action, but it is the great and far-reaching educational preparation for them' (HADAMOWSKY, *Propaganda und nationale Macht*, page 33).

'All propaganda is preparation for political action' (Ibid., page 45).

† 'Public opinion is manufactured . . .' (Goebbels, 7.4.33. to the foreign Press, GOEBBELS, *Revolution der Deutschen*, page 165).

† A little variety doesn't do any harm. 'We were those who instituted the holding of popular celebrations next door to the meeting hall' (GOEBBELS, *Revolution der Deutschen*, page 199).

'The task of propaganda is not the scientific education of the individual, but directing the attention of the masses to definite facts, examples, necessities, etc., the significance of which is thereby brought for the first time within their horizon' (HITLER, *Mein Kampf*, page 197).

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'The task of propaganda is . . . not a weighing up of various rights but the exclusive emphasizing of the cause it represents' (HITLER, *Mein Kampf*, page 197).

#### THE TECHNIQUE OF PROPAGANDA

'The doctrine of suggestion . . . asserts that suggestion only becomes effective in a state of excitement. Ridicule and fear are both reactions, states of excitement, which favour the intervention of suggestion. Ridicule gives a feeling of superiority, because where there is laughter there is also the prospect of victory. But a strong feeling of fear leads directly to action, because of the sense of danger it gives. Thus ridicule and fear are two components of propaganda which are indispensable for its success' (HADAMOWSKY, *Propaganda und nationale Macht*).

'The most effective factors in a mass demonstration are those things which suggest strength; first of all the number of those taking part, as well as everything else which personifies force — armed men, uniformed men, and all forms of weapons' (Ibid., page 47).

'All the force, perhaps even more force than really exists, must be shown and demonstrated. A hundred speeches, five hundred newspaper articles, wireless speeches, films and plays cannot produce as much effect as a disciplined march-past of huge masses of men or the demonstration of the military, police and political power of the state' (Ibid., page 48).

'The decisive factors in swaying the masses are not so-called objective books and articles but . . . hate-filled pamphlets and distorting caricatures. Distortion, misrepresentation, one-sidedness appear to belong to the essence of propaganda' (Ibid., page 18).

'To have rock-like faith in a thing, not to be intimidated by the strongest excitement, and to hammer the same thought tirelessly into the brain of the masses' (Ibid., page 20).

The mass meeting is 'the only way to a really effective, because directly personal, influence' (HITLER, *Mein Kampf*, page 115).

Propaganda must apply 'in word and manner the coarseness of feeling of the masses and their expressions' (page 376). 'Further, it must avoid everything which might diminish or even only modify its capacity to influence the masses' (page 117). The points of view of humanity or beauty must be eliminated from the struggle and from propaganda (page 196).

'The nationalizing of the masses can never result from indecisive

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steps, from the weak stressing of so-called objectivity of outlook, but only from a ruthless and fanatically one-sided drive towards our single goal' (pages 370-1).

### THE RAW MATERIAL

'The great mass of a people does not consist of diplomats or professors of constitutional law; it does not even consist mainly of reasonable people, capable of sober judgment. It consists of a lot of poor devils inclined to doubt and uncertainty. Thus, if one's own propaganda allows even a glimmer of rightness to the other side, the seed of doubt about the rightness of one's own cause is already sown. The masses are not in a position to tell where the injustice to the other side ends and the injustice to our own begins' (HITLER, *Mein Kampf*, pages 200-220).

'The majority of the people is so feminine by nature and disposition that their thoughts and actions are determined less by sober consideration than by their feelings. These feelings are not complicated, but very simple and limited. Nor are the feelings much qualified, being either positive or negative, love or hate, right or wrong, truth or falsehood . . .' (Ibid., page 201).

'Nothing is so forgetful as the masses' (HADAMOWSKY, *Propaganda und nationale Macht*, page 20).

### IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD

'The printed is beaten by the spoken word' (Ibid., page 72).

'The power of suggestion of an effective speech is far greater than that of a leading article' (GOEBBELS, *Kampf um Berlin*, page 19).

'He (Hitler) is a master of simplification. He sees the most complicated problems in their lapidary simplicity . . .' (GOEBBELS, *Vom Kaiserhof zur Reichskanzlei*, page 140).

'All propaganda must be popular, and its intellectual level must be in accordance with the intelligence of the greatest dullard among those at whom it is directed. Thus the greater the numbers of those at whom it is directed the lower will be its level. But if its object is to draw a whole people within its range, no precautions to avoid too high an intellectual level can be excessive' (HITLER, *Mein Kampf*, page 197).

'The more modest its intellectual ballast, the more exclusively it pays attention to the feelings of the masses, the more overwhelming will be its success' (Ibid., page 198).

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'The receptivity of the masses is very limited, and their intelligence is small; on the other hand their forgetfulness is great. Hence all effective propaganda must confine itself to only very few points, and these must be hammered home as slogans until even the last and weakest is able to understand' (Ibid., page 198).

'The content of that which is put over by propaganda must never be altered, though variations are permissible. Every variation on the theme must lead up to the same thing. Thus the slogan must be illuminated from various sides, but every argument must end up with the slogan again. Only so can and will propaganda maintain its unity and effectiveness' (Ibid., page 203).

'If he (the speaker) sees in the first place that he is not understood, he will become so primitive and plain in his explanation that even the last will understand him. Secondly, if he feels that his audience is unable to follow him, he will build up his thoughts carefully and slowly until even the weakest of all will no more be unable to follow; and thirdly, if he suspects that his audience appears not to be convinced of the rightness of what is offered them, he will repeat it so often and with ever new examples, and himself bring forward the unspoken objections which he feels in the air, and go on refuting and shattering them until finally the last survivors of the opposition show him by their attitude and their play of expression that they have capitulated' (Ibid., page 527).

'An opponent's own weapons must be struck out of his hands before he can answer' (Ibid., page 522).

'Even the time of day at which a speech is made can have a decisive influence on its effectiveness' (page 530).

### TRUTH AS A PETTY-BOURGEOIS PREJUDICE

Jewish Marxism 'proceeded from the correct assumption that there is always something credible in the very size of a lie . . . as the masses, in the primitive simplicity of their minds, fall for a big lie more easily than for a little one . . .' (Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, page 252).

The great majority of readers are persons 'who believe everything that they read' (page 262). 'The influence of the Press will be quite tremendous among all those people who represent the masses. They are not in the position and have no desire to check what is placed before them, so that their entire attitude to all problems of

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the day can be traced back almost exclusively to the external influence of others' (Ibid., page 263).

People are not to be regarded as 'taking a scientifically objective and sober position with regard to political events . . . Their task consists in co-operation in the creation of historical realities' (GOEBBELS, *Kampf um Berlin*, 1st edition, page 192). Goebbels wrote on 20.5.29 'that the first thing for a revolutionary is not so much to say what he wants as to say what he does not want' (*Der Angriff*, page 302).

'It is part of the brilliance of a great leader to make even opponents who are very far from one another seem in reality to belong to one and the same camp, because to weak and vacillating people the recognition of different enemies leads easily to the beginning of doubts about their own rightness' (HITLER, *Mein Kampf*, page 129).

'It is all the same whether they (the opponents of the Nazis) laugh at us or curse us, whether they set us up as blockheads or criminals; the main thing is that they should continually occupy themselves with us and that we should gradually appear in the eyes of the workers as the power with whom eventually another day of reckoning will come' (*Mein Kampf*, page 544).

'We must . . . fight to secure for the movement, if not love and respect then at least hatred and a passionate loathing' (GOEBBELS, *Kampf um Berlin*, 1st edition, page 25).

### AN ARMED PROPHET

'No one dashes panic-stricken from the cinema when shooting takes place on the screen or an actor shouts "Fire! Fire!" But the same thing transferred to the midst of a mass meeting, even if it is only feigned or provoked by political opponents, immediately causes panic, flight and excitement. There is thus an essential difference between the sublimated procedure that we experience in play . . . and the real thing that takes place before our eyes. This essential difference resides in the fact that all play remains consciously play and cannot extinguish the unquenchable urge of the masses towards their own experience' (HADAMOWSKY, *Propaganda und nationale Macht*, pages 46-7).

It is 'important to introduce blind discipline at our meetings and to assure the undisputed authority of the chair' (HITLER, *Mein Kampf*, page 541). At the opening of a meeting it must be made plain 'that it is we who are the masters of the house, and that anyone

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who dares even to make an interruption will be unmercifully thrown out by the way he came in; and further that we decline all responsibility for any such fellow. Moreover, if there is time and it suits us, there will be a discussion afterwards. If not, not' (Ibid., page 549).

The procedure must be adopted of 'taking the protection of our meetings into our own hands. One can never count on official protection' (page 545). 'Every meeting that relies exclusively for its protection on the police discredits the organizers in the eyes of the masses' (Ibid., page 546). A force must be built up for this purpose 'consisting chiefly of young fellows' (Ibid., page 549). It was the task of this body 'to anticipate our reputation of not being a debating society, but an extremely resolute and united fighting force' (Ibid., page 550). 'Fifty well-organized men can turn several hundred opponents out of the hall' (Ibid., pages 556-7).



FOURTH DAY  
TEMPTATIONS





## DIALOGUE X

ON THE TEMPTATION TO RELAX THE 'WILL TO POWER', AND ON  
THE MISTRUST WITH WHICH THE FUTURE DICTATOR MUST  
REGARD PROGRAMMES, IDEAS AND FORMULAS

THOMAS THE CYNIC Mr. W., allow me to suggest to you a delightfully Fascist slogan: 'Malcontents of all parties, unite and follow me!'

MR. W. H'm. Not bad. But our country is so overwhelmed with crude slogans that I am afraid the public is beginning to tire of them.

THOMAS THE CYNIC If that is the case, consider the advisability of adopting 'No more slogans!' as a slogan. When an invalid is sick and tired of medicines, the intelligent doctor can always prescribe him a new one, taking care to call it an 'anti-medicine'.

MR. W. That's a good idea. But the trouble in America is that the whole thing is rather discredited. The word 'Fascist' is in bad odour, and there is a very general dislike of it.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Then the battle-cry for you, as a good Fascist, Mr. W., is 'Down with Fascism!' To establish a Fascist dictatorship in America under the slogan of 'Down with Fascism!' would be a political masterpiece. Perhaps you know that Pilsudski established his dictatorship at Warsaw in 1926 under the slogan of 'Down with dictatorship!' thus succeeding in deceiving even the Socialist and Communist parties. But why confine ourselves to one example? Has there ever been a tyranny that was not imposed in the name of liberty?

PROFESSOR PICKUP I had no intention of taking part in to-day's discussion, a fact which Mr. W. will corroborate. But your last statement is really too much, Mr. Cynic, and I

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must protest. How will it be possible to recognize a Fascist if he uses the language of the democrats? If everyone develops the habit of saying the opposite of what he thinks the result will be chaos. If the internationalist comes forward as a champion of national defence, the nationalist as an advocate of the brotherhood of the peoples, the Communist as an advocate of class peace, the Christian as an instigator of civil war, politics will be completely unintelligible. It will be the Tower of Babel over again.

THOMAS THE CYNIC The confusion of tongues exists in politics already. Language has been used wildly and recklessly in politics for many years. Politics has been a Tower of Babel for a long time. It is severely afflicted with the disease known in the history of philosophy as 'nominalism'. Nominalism was first discovered by the Cynics and the Stoics when they demonstrated that most of the ideas and generalizations which were the subject of philosophical argument in their time were only words. In our own post-war period political nominalism has ended by plunging poor humanity into a vortex of false problems stated in meaningless and ambiguous terms. All the parties that competed for power to some extent share in the responsibility for this, but the chief share must be laid at the door of the Fascist parties which were born of the war. The result is that men have been distracted from their real needs and led into a maze of distorting mirrors. Thus if a party is formed to fight Socialism and protect the interests of the possessing classes it will as a matter of course masquerade as a 'social', 'democratic' or even 'Socialist' party. If a political party calls itself radical, it is undoubtedly a party of moderation. If a new party is formed by splitting away from an old one, it will be called a party of unity. If a party takes orders and receives subsidies from abroad, you may be sure that it talks on all occasions of national independence. This political nominalism often sheds a macabre humour on the contem-

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porary scene. When troops are sent to nourish civil war in a friendly country it is called, as you know, non-intervention. When political opponents, often destined to be shot 'while attempting to escape', are thrown into prison, it is called 'protective arrest'. Party courts whose purpose is to terrorize public opinion are known as 'popular tribunals'. Armaments are justified everywhere on the plea that they will preserve peace. If you perjure yourself, your justification is that you did so to save your honour. Italy occupies Abyssinia to suppress slavery in that country. Japan invades China to help the Chinese people to throw off the yoke of the Kuomintang. Britain defends her Empire in the name of the rights of the peoples, and the Soviet Union defends the *status quo* in the name of Socialism. Lying has become so habitual that it is almost boring. An inexperienced person into whose hands there fell a government propaganda sheet might safely be warned that to get at the truth he should believe exactly the opposite of what he read. From Mr. W.'s point of view, the conclusion is that a Fascist leader has less reason than any other to bother with the difference between truth and falsehood. The only criterion of his propaganda must be its effectiveness. The most dangerous temptation with which he can be faced is that of becoming a slave of ideas. His job is to twist them to his own purposes.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Without ideas you cannot make history, Mr. Cynic. Understanding a movement means understanding the idea behind it. True though it may be that the Fascist idea often presents itself in different guises, it cannot be denied that there are countries at the present time in which the masses, ready to believe in and sacrifice themselves for a transcendent ideal, are electrified by it. The Fascist leader creates a new vision of life. He raises himself out of the rut of ordinary politicians, tied to petty interests, and succeeds in giving humanity new aims and new ideals.

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THOMAS THE CYNIC There is such a thing as Fascist propaganda, but there is no such thing as the Fascist idea. What you have just been saying has nothing to do with Fascism, professor, but reminds me of a German theory of history called *Geistesgeschichte*. But since we are not concerned here with the theory of pure spirit but with real and complicated events involving the whole of man, permit me to answer you not in the abstract but by quoting facts. The collected works of Mussolini contain the most violent abuse of doctrinaire politicians ever written. He calls them ostriches, blockheads, horses in blinkers. When the first *fasci* were founded Mussolini declared: 'our programme is deeds. We have no ready-made doctrine.' Later he announced that 'Fascism is practical. It has no fundamental assumptions or ultimate aims. It does not presume to live for ever or even for a long time'. In a violently anti-Christian article that appeared on January 1st, 1920, he stated:

We have torn all revealed truths to pieces, spat on all dogmas, rejected all paradises, scorned all the quacks, black, white and red, who come forward with miraculous remedies promising felicity to the human race. We have no belief in programmes, in plans, in saints or apostles. Above all we do not believe in felicity, in salvation, in the promised land.

At the time of the March to Rome he announced with satisfaction that 'action has buried philosophy'. What he meant was that men of action had got the better of the doctrinaires. This did not, of course, stop him from using ideas in his propaganda, borrowing at his convenience from the most contradictory sources, just as he exploited to his own advantage such slight benefit as was to be derived from the fact that his followers included people of the most conflicting ideas, all of whom wished to impose their own pet theories on the Fascist movement. Among them were syndicalists, imperialistic aristocrats, Catholic nationalists. But at heart Mussolini had

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nothing but contempt for all this, and in his scheme of things political ideas and theories occupied only a secondary and ornamental role. Having been a journalist and a Socialist, he had the right background for this; his contempt for ideas and his unscrupulous use of them came to him as second nature. The virtuosity with which he juggled with principles during his meteoric career equalled that with which the juggler, Rastelli, the greatest exponent of his art in Italy, manipulated his plates. In comparison with Mussolini, Hitler seems a clumsy, heavy-handed and fanatical novice, entirely ignorant of modern political ideas, and moreover encumbered with a farrago of turgid and irrational notions that have nothing to do with politics whatever. Nevertheless German National-Socialism exactly resembled Italian Fascism in its attitude to political doctrines and programmes. Goering confessed in *Aufbau einer Nation* that 'the programme was never the decisive thing with us'. The chief Nazi paper has repeatedly emphasized that the 'essence of National-Socialism does not lie in our programme but in our will'. Alfred Rosenberg was equally explicit in his book *Blut und Ehre*.

We confess that our alpha and omega was the impetus of our will — he wrote — so that even our economic and social programme, our whole programme for reorganizing the state, is determined by the resolute section of the German people.

Hitler has always concerned himself more with the technique of propaganda than with its content. Kracauer has rightly said of National-Socialism 'that the propaganda is not the tool of the idea, but the idea is the tool of the propaganda'. Whether what it states is true or false is immaterial. The only criterion is its popularity and effectiveness. An idea is not taken into the programme of the movement until it has 'caught on'. This phenomenon, which is common both to Fascism and National-

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Socialism, is another relic of the Great War. War propaganda, even if undertaken by the most civilized, most democratic, most Socialist government that can be imagined, is bound to be unscrupulous. Its function is to do the greatest possible damage to the enemy, to riddle him with scorn and hatred, to dishonour, deceive and demoralize him, and encourage the fighting spirit and resolution of one's own side, hiding the truth from it and making promises which will not be fulfilled.

MR. W. Do you mean that Fascist leaders are insincere?

THOMAS THE CYNIC Mr. W., I should never have expected from you a question so utterly devoid of political significance. There is no doubt whatever that Fascist leaders sincerely desire power. That is the real answer to your question. Ordinary people may see falsehood and inconsistency in a Fascist leader's words and actions, but he himself is completely unaware of them. That is because all he says and all he does is directed to one single aim and subject to one single passion, his perfectly sincere lust for power. Have you ever seen and heard a dictator speaking to his people? The dominant impression one takes away from such an experience is invariably the orator's profound and penetrating sincerity. Even Mussolini seems sincere, and that says everything. No political speaker sweats and throbs with so much sincerity as a dictator addressing the mob. But take his speech and dissect it in cold blood, and you find it nothing but a farrago of lies and distorted half-truths. That does not mean that the dictator is sincere in the sense in which an actor is said to be sincere. It merely means that he is a politician. He does not wear his sincerity as a mask for external use only; the masters in the art of deceiving others nearly always end by also deceiving themselves. Indeed, the latter is a necessary background for their ferocity. All this, however, is not a political problem, but a problem of individual psychology, to be left to psychiatrists and novelists. Nevertheless I am glad you asked the question,

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because it enables me to make it clear that my attitude to the question of 'political sincerity' does not apply to Fascist dictators only. Many who complain of the lying and the hypocrisy of the dictators seem to have forgotten the poor esteem in which the virtue of consistency has always been held in politics.

It was by becoming a Catholic that I ended the Vendée War — Napoleon said to the Council of State — It was by becoming a Mussulman that I established myself in Egypt, by becoming an ultramontane that I gained the priests of Italy. If I governed a nation of Jews I should re-establish the Temple of Solomon.

Napoleon has never been held up as a model of integrity, so perhaps he is not a fair example, but the same criticism will not apply if I recall the lack of respect for personal integrity displayed by royal houses whenever reasons of state require it. I am not now referring to the constitutional practice by which a king 'reigns but does not govern', and is able, without exposing himself to criticism or discussion, to sanction the most extreme political changes, even those which violate the constitution which he has solemnly sworn to uphold. But there is a normal and regular practice, sanctioned by long tradition, the 'educative' value of which cannot be overlooked. I refer to the example of hypocrisy frequently set by queens, who are held up to the people as models of all the virtues, and in particular that of personal integrity. When dynastic or other reasons of state require it, princesses, with the full acquiescence of the highest religious authorities, light-heartedly abandon their religious beliefs and adopt others, which they have hitherto regarded as heretical. Thus Princess Helena of Montenegro abandoned the Orthodox Church and became a Catholic to be crowned Queen of Italy. Her daughter, Princess Giovanna, renounced Catholicism and became the



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Orthodox Queen of Bulgaria. Princess Victoria Eugenie of Battenberg was a Protestant, but became a Catholic to marry the King of Spain, and Princess Astrid of Sweden was converted from Protestantism to Catholicism in order to become Queen of the Belgians. The Orthodox Queen Marie of Rumania was a Protestant English princess before her marriage.

MR. W. If inconsistency is such an old and well-established political necessity, why make so much fuss about it in connection with the leaders of Fascism? Shall we not change the subject?

PROFESSOR PICKUP But first I want you to explain an inconsistency into which you yourself appear to have fallen, Mr. Cynic. If the Fascist leader, in deceiving others, generally ends by also deceiving himself, and therefore, as you admitted, can be regarded as subjectively sincere, how does he manage to retain his capacity for cold calculation? How can he preserve the detachment required to change his language whenever the situation requires it?

THOMAS THE CYNIC I did not suspect you were so logical, Professor. The minds of great men are not, however, governed by logic. The problem you have just expounded would certainly be a real one in the case of an ordinary, normal man. Such a person, if he is sincere and remains consistent, will enjoy the esteem of his honest fellow-citizens but will never have a great political career. On the other hand if he is insincere, his words and actions will lack fire and conviction and hence real effectiveness, and he will neither feel nor inspire confidence. But your exceptional man is endowed by nature with a mind divided into watertight compartments. This enables him to overcome all difficulties. He puts the things which do not fit in with one another into separate compartments. This psychological phenomenon is known as schizophrenia, and was not foreseen by Aristotle when he formulated his logic. It is the most precious gift with which merciful Providence can endow

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the future dictator at birth, for it enables him to enjoy the advantages both of sincerity and insincerity. He takes every opportunity of talking about his loyalty to his ideals, and sincerely declares himself ready to sacrifice everything for their triumph, while all the time he practises the most shameless inconsistency, changing his language to suit every new situation, breaking his pledges and discarding his ideology with the cheerfulness of a pilot throwing ballast overboard. Thus he is a sincere liar, or a genuine fraud, whichever way you like to look at it; and the combination of two normally incompatible qualifications gives him an overwhelming advantage over all other politicians, particularly in times of confusion like the present, when both sincerity and lying are insufficient by themselves. That is how it looks to an outside observer, looking at it with the unprejudiced eye of the psychologist. The future dictator himself does not, of course, see it in the same light. All he sees is the struggle for power, in which he can recognize victory or defeat; but he is blind to the difference between truth and falsehood, which is an utterly remote and irrelevant consideration to him. In this connection it is instructive to observe Hitler's righteous indignation whenever the various occasions on which he has broken his word or committed perjury are drawn to his attention. There is no doubt whatever that his indignation is perfectly sincere. Konrad Heiden says that

Hitler, carried away by his impetuous nature, never knows exactly what he has pledged himself to, and he must not be considered a partner on whose word one can rely. He will break a promise as soon as it suits him, and consider himself a man of honour into the bargain.

The real explanation, I believe, is of a political nature. Hitler knows very well what he has pledged himself to. He has pledged himself to power, and that up to the hilt. No other pledge exists for him. If he were loyal to any other pledge he

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would be lying. And that is true not only of Hitler but of every real Fascist leader.

MR. W. Let us come down to earth again, if you please. If this faculty of which you speak is a gift of nature, there is no point in discussing it. Either you have it or you haven't, and that is the end of the matter.

THOMAS THE CYNIC I must add, however, that in reality things are not so simple as that, and even the best watertight compartments may leak. The psychological make-up which I have described does not assure the future dictator of complete immunity from doubts, uncertainties and dangerous temptations, and the biographies of the dictators are there to testify to the treacherous manner in which loyalty to an idea, or even a philistine need of internal consistency, may sometimes succeed in seeping through the crevices of even the most efficiently constructed psychological bulkheads, gravely handicapping a political career. These difficulties may arise in various ways, and it will be well worth-while my pointing them out to you, Mr. W., so that you may be on your guard against them. Sometimes it may be merely a matter of mental laziness; the Fascist leader may fail to recognize a new situation quickly enough and adopt new slogans to suit it. This happened innumerable times to Hitler and Mussolini, but they were always able to repair the damage in time, because their opponents were tied hand and foot to principles, programmes, formulas and traditions, and were therefore incapable of forestalling them in the exploitation of the new situation. Or it may be a sentimental attachment to some youthful symbol or ideal, such as Mussolini's republicanism and anti-clericalism, to which he remained loyal long after his followers were monarchical and clerical. Consistency of this kind is very dangerous indeed, and must be crushed ruthlessly as soon as there is the least sign that it may block the path that leads to power. If the temptation occurs when success has already

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begun to smile upon the future dictator, it may arise from a feeling of vanity, I might almost say from a desire for self-esteem, the desire to place himself upon the same footing as his political opponents, who prate everlastingly of their noble aspirations, their high ideals, and of 'legality' and such things, and give him the feeling that they look down on him as a vulgar adventurer. The temptation is only too intelligible, and both Hitler and Mussolini were gravely affected and nearly had their heads turned by it for several weeks before they came into power, and they only overcame it when they realized that their destiny lay in a different direction, and that if they tried to change it they would be lost. Success, and the intoxication that comes in its train, aggravated by the slavish adulation of his followers, may lead the future dictator to over-estimate the power of his own personality and encourage him in the illusion that the future course taken by his party and his country depends on him alone. This temptation reminds one of the fly on the wheel who thought he was driving the coach. If it does not always lead to disaster, it inevitably leads to the most terrible humiliations.

**PROFESSOR PICKUP** Nevertheless you will not deny that the Fascist leader, even before he comes into power, enjoys exceptional authority over his party, as he has no need to render an account of his stewardship to the usual committees and congresses.

**THOMAS THE CYNIC** That is perfectly true. But no power is absolute, even though there may be no statutory checks on it. There will be no need for me to remind you, my dear Professor, that politics is the art of the possible. It is true that there are no situations to which there is but one single obligatory solution, but it is also true that historically the possible solutions are always limited, and the politician's choice can never be arbitrary. The leader who is not aware of the concrete historical possibilities open to him, the result of the ever-changing

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relation of forces in the real world, but allows his view to be obscured by doctrinaire fantasies, ends in practice by creating nothing but a vain agitation, not in the field of pure and genuine politics, but in the adjacent territories of mythology, literature or morals. The fate of Cola di Rienzi is still instructive in this respect, for it illustrates the evil effect that literature may have on the mind of a naive popular leader. Cola di Rienzi became the master of Rome, supported by the priests and the people against the nobles, who had been tyrannizing over the city during the Pope's absence at Avignon. But the steps he took in attempting to translate into action *quae legendo didicerat*, the things he had learned in books, led to his own undoing and that of the cause he represented. In 1347, not realizing the true reasons for his modest political success nor the true state of Italy and Europe in his time, he declared Rome once more to be the capital of the world, organized a festival of the unity of Italy, invited Ludwig of Bavaria, Charles IV and many other princes to Rome to acknowledge the new Empire, arrogated to himself the right of nominating the Emperor and assumed the pompous and fortunately not hereditary title of *candidatus Spiritus Sancti miles, Nicolaus severus et clemens, liberator Urbis, zelator Italiae, amator Urbis et tribunus augustus*. That sealed his fate. The priests abandoned him and he was killed by the mob. There is nothing surprising in the fact that his character has been warmly admired by writers and artists in succeeding centuries, because the task that he attempted was essentially a rhetorical and not a political one. Certainly rhetoric plays an essential part in the exercise of power, but one of the vital differences between the statesman and the rhetorician is that the statesman uses rhetoric but does not allow himself to be guided by it. The contrast between the behaviour of D'Annunzio and that of Mussolini with regard to the Fiume question, by which Italy was torn immediately after the war, gives us a modern example of how the rhetorician

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and the politician may come into conflict, even though they may seem to be in the service of the same cause. In September 1919, D'Annunzio, secretly supported by military and dynastic circles who covered his retreat and guaranteed that not a hair of his head should suffer, led a band of Italian soldiers to Fiume and occupied it in order to prevent its falling into the hands of Yugoslavia, to whom it had been promised by the Peace Conference. D'Annunzio was only put in charge of the expedition at the last moment, and it would have taken place just as well without him, but in the eyes of the public it appeared a purely 'D'Annunzian' enterprise from the first. The poet took advantage of this to set up a theatrical miniature state in the little city on the shores of the Adriatic, governed autocratically by Poetry in person, with the assistance of the other Muses. A large crowd waited perpetually beneath the poet's window, because whenever the mood inspired him he would step out on to the veranda to declaim his latest message to the nations of the world. He even planned a constitution, settling all the social and political problems of the past and of the future, only omitting those of the present. Mussolini supported D'Annunzio's adventure from Milan, and the farce continued for sixteen months, in other words as long as it suited the Italian Government. In November, 1920, Giolitti's Government concluded the Treaty of Rapallo with the Yugoslavian government, and Fiume was evacuated after the merest pretence of resistance, whereupon Mussolini left D'Annunzio, who had shown an inclination to resist, in the lurch.

**PROFESSOR PICKUP** At Venice we met one of the poet's comrades-in-arms. He described Mussolini's behaviour on that occasion as a betrayal.

**THOMAS THE CYNIC** The betrayal that took place on that occasion was the betrayal of Rhetoric by Politics. But observe that if it had behaved any differently Politics would have betrayed itself. The Treaty of Rapallo was signed two months

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after the end of the occupation of the factories, and there were many signs that the *elan* of the revolutionary movement among the workers was exhausted, and that Italian Socialism was beginning its disastrous retreat all along the line. The industrialists and landlords, panic-stricken by the danger which they had so narrowly escaped, were turning to the *fasci* in larger and larger numbers in order to destroy the organizations of the working-class and wipe out the concessions they had hurriedly granted during the preceding years. Thus entirely new perspectives opened out before Mussolini towards the end of 1920. Whatever pledges he might previously have given D'Annunzio obviously seemed nothing but poetical licence now.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Nevertheless, in spite of their different temperaments, D'Annunzio and Mussolini were at heart struggling for the same cause, as was proved by subsequent events.

MR. W. The man of action cannot be tied down to such rigid lines of consistency as the thinker or the artist.

THOMAS THE CYNIC You must bear in mind that the cause that lies nearest to the Fascist leader's heart is power, while what lies nearest the rhetorician's heart is words. Your true leader must possess the capacity to exploit the assistance that the rhetorician offers him, but he must be on his guard not to let himself be led astray by the latter's words. D'Annunzio's adventures in the post-war period provide a classic example of the auxiliary role of rhetoric, its incapacity to play a leading role. In the last analysis, the political defeat of European Socialism can be traced back to the pre-eminence that rhetoric had acquired in the last few decades over the true interests of the workers. I think it would be dangerous to say that the rhetorician has to be more consistent than the man of action. In reality both are consistent, but in different ways, corresponding to their different aspirations. As I have already

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said, the Fascist leader is consistent as long as he keeps to the path that leads to power, even though that may involve him in many 'inconsistencies'. Similarly the rhetorician is consistent as long as he does not lose a single opportunity of striking an effective attitude and speaking. After Mussolini's 'betrayal' D'Annunzio broke off all relations with him, ordered his legionaries to leave the *fasci*, made overtures to the Socialist trade unions, and attempted, without complete success, to bend his rhetoric to the service of humanitarian Socialism. But in August 1922, when the Fascist gangs raided and wrecked the town hall of Milan, the administration of which had been in Socialist hands for many years, he suddenly found himself on the side of the assailants and celebrated the event with a most eloquent speech from the balcony of the town hall. From the point of view of the commonplace morality of the man in the street, that was certainly inconsistent. But it was not inconsistent to D'Annunzio. A sincere orator only feels inconsistent when he is silent.

MR. W. Might he not have spoken at an anti-Fascist meeting, denouncing the violence of the Fascist gangs and vindicating the flouted rights of the people of Milan?

THOMAS THE CYNIC That would have been impossible, my dear sir, and for no other than a rhetorical reason. All D'Annunzio's books prove that he was richly endowed with a capacity to celebrate unbridled violence. His poetical chords reacted to a conqueror's triumph, but there was nothing in him to vibrate with human solidarity for the wretched lot of the conquered, even if they happened to be his political allies. He therefore had no liberty of choice. A few months later he remained loyal to his nature and repeated this behaviour. Having intrigued up to the last moment to prevent Mussolini's accession to power, he suddenly went over to Mussolini's side as soon as he had won.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Do you not attribute too much importance



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to tactics, to the inevitable minor tricks of the trade, at the expense of the fundamental programme of Fascism?

THOMAS THE GYNG Fascism has no programme but only tactics, my dear professor, unless by programme you mean the conquest of power. Mussolini has never let himself be led astray by prejudices, even on fundamental questions, and at decisive moments he has always played a double game, waiting to see which way the wind was blowing before committing himself irreticvably to either side. In August 1914, as editor of the Socialist *Avanti*, he supported the Socialist anti-War policy. But he saw very well that Italy would not be able to remain neutral for long and the pacifist position was repugnant to his nature. Therefore, while continuing to write anti-war articles for the *Avanti*, he made overtures to the circles who were working for Italian intervention on the Allied side. When his double-dealing was exposed in an opposition paper, he had to abandon this ambiguous position and come out hurriedly as an interventionist. After the war, when everyone was expecting a proletarian revolution in Italy, he speculated at the same time on a Socialist victory and a Socialist defeat. In September 1920, when the metallurgical workers, followed by workers in other industries, occupied the factories, and it seemed to many that nothing could stop the working-class revolution, Mussolini did not waste a moment. He asked for a conference with the strike committee and made them the following statement. 'I follow the occupation of the factories with interest,' he said. 'It is indifferent to me whether the factories belong to the masters or the men. The important thing is the moral regeneration of the country.' But when the movement failed, and the panic felt by the possessing classes was transformed into arrogance, Mussolini violently attacked 'the attempt to plunge Italy into the morass of Bolshevism' and offered himself to the industrialists as the country's saviour from 'the Asiatic menace of Socialism'. After he was in power

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he gradually liquidated all the other parties, adopting the double policy that he himself described as that of 'the olive and the club'. One example will suffice to describe it. Cesare Rossi, chief of the Fascist Government Press Bureau, revealed that in July 1923, Mussolini ordered the Fascists of Florence, Pisa, Milan, Monza, and other less important places, to raid and wreck the premises of the local Catholic associations during the night, but at the same time, according to the historian Salvemini, he sent a telegram to the prefects of those provinces in terms that deserve to be quoted literally.

In view unfavourable repercussions Vatican latest anti-Catholic incidents it would be well if local leaders provincial Fascist Federations officially approached the archiepiscopal see to present regrets renewing assurances of high respect of Fascism for Catholic religion.

When these tactics, which had yielded such rich results in domestic politics, were applied by Mussolini to international politics, he easily outwitted the whole League of Nations. A careful comparison between the description of the preparations for the Abyssinian War given in General De Bono's book and the temporizing policy of the Fascist representative at Geneva will reveal that every apparently conciliatory proposal advanced by the latter coincided with the adoption of new war measures. No one can deny that this policy succeeded to perfection, and, were it not for the unfortunate Abyssinians, I should be unable to help feeling delighted that the British Imperialists, so prodigal of aid and applause for the Fascists so long as they exercised their art of government on Italians only, at last had occasion to experience their political methods themselves.

MR. W. I do not doubt the accuracy of what you say, Mr. Cynic, but I must say that it seems to me that you have oversimplified matters. Do you really believe that deception is always at the bottom of Fascist tactics? That would be very monotonous and easy.

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THOMAS THE CYNIC When the Fascists play a double game, deception is not always their only purpose. Their object may also be to delay having to make a final decision in an unclear situation, before their opponents' strength and intentions are known, besides assuring themselves of a dignified retreat, without giving the impression of flight, in case unforeseen or dangerous complications should arise. It may seem a monotonous game, but it is certainly not an easy one. Mussolini himself has sometimes failed to play it, and, in spite of his reiterated professions of pragmatism, in spite of his political flair and his unscrupulousness, has unwisely allowed himself to be led astray by one or other of the temptations which I have already described. It might even be maintained that Italian Fascism advanced to power by twists and turns, and that, at every important cross-road, Mussolini expected Fascism to take the opposite road to that which, fortunately for itself, it ultimately took. On every occasion, however, he adapted himself, subordinating his pride to his ambition. Leaving minor incidents aside, I shall recall two decisive episodes in the development of Fascism. At the end of 1920 Mussolini believed it would remain exclusively an urban phenomenon, just at the moment when in spite of him it had started spreading in the country. In the summer of 1921, Mussolini, observing that Fascism was no longer a docile instrument in his hands, launched an appeal for 'a return to our origins' and made a pact with the Socialist Party. But the *fasci* of the agrarian provinces revolted, the pact with the Socialists was annulled and Mussolini adapted himself. A year later he was himself pouring scorn upon the 'idealist' Fascists who wanted 'to return to their origins'.

To return to our origins, as certain people want us to, would mean declining either into infantilism or senility — he wrote. — Fascism is and must be the organized expression of this tendency of the contemporary spirit, of the

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classic resumption of life against decadent theories and races.

MR. W. If I may interrupt you, what does the phrase 'classic resumption of life' mean?

THOMAS THE CYNIC Nothing whatever. The adjectives 'classic' and 'historic' are often used redundantly in Italian, and can be freely added to any noun whatever, merely serving to add solemnity. Take, for instance, an everyday phrase like 'At this moment, in front of this spaghetti', and compare it with 'At this historic moment, in front of this classic spaghetti', and you will immediately perceive the enormous difference.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Mr. Cynic, I cannot help feeling that you have been giving us all these details without getting us anywhere. May I remind you that what we were going to discuss to-day was the Fascist party programme?

MR. W. Mr. Cynic has already explained that in its early days Fascism has no programme but only a method.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Certainly, if your idea of a programme is a strictly formal one. There is no doubt whatever that Fascism, unfortunately, starts with no systematic philosophical background leading logically to a list of political demands. Nevertheless, apart from and in addition to the sheer will to power, a real programme is always implicit in every political party, even if it is unformulated. I should say that it is the hidden but fundamental part of it, and it is the task of history to bring it to light. Now Neo-Sociology . . .

THOMAS THE CYNIC Fascism never appears as a party, my dear professor, but as a movement, an anti-party. Don't forget that members of other parties were freely accepted in the first Italian *fasci*. No ideological creed whatever was imposed on those who presented themselves for membership. Among the Fascists of 1919-20 were Catholics, anti-Catholics, Protestants, Jews, atheists, republicans, monarchists, Socialists, anti-Socialists, trade unionists, imperialists, as well as believers

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in the principle of national independence and the right of the self-determination of the nations. Mussolini quoted Mazzini, Blanqui, Nietzsche, Stirner, Sorel as the occasion required. At the third Fascist congress he demanded the transformation of the movement into a party and the adoption of a programme, but these novelties were intended purely as expedients to impose discipline on his followers. When the congress was over he once more proclaimed his purely empirical principles.

The Fascist phenomenon — he wrote — appears as the most interesting manifestation of the relativist philosophy. And since, as Wahiger states, relativism goes back to Nietzsche and his Will to Power, Italian Fascism has been and remains the most formidable creation of the individual and national will to power.

Heiden observed the same indifference to political ideology at the very beginnings of German National-Socialism.

Every variety of political doctrine could be represented in the party, from the most reactionary monarchism to the most ferocious revolutionism, from the most unbridled individualism to the most rigorous brand of Socialism, absolutely denying the human personality. The party was extraordinarily liberal with regard to political theories. Hitler left everyone with the illusion that if he became a Nazi he would realize his dearest ambition. In return, however, Hitler required the most complete submission to his authority as leader. Thus a gigantic army of individualists was built up, each one of whom believed he was marching straight towards his goal.

Although the Nazis were organized as a party from the first, Hitler preferred to call it a 'movement', because the word implied a mass on the march, a mass in action, a mass capable of breaking the rigid ranks of the old parties. 'A mass must be plastic if it is to be shaped', wrote Hitler, an artist *manqué*, borrowing a phrase from the arts. He is obviously Mussolini's

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superior in all questions concerning the technique of propaganda, but it would be easy to demonstrate the same superiority on the part of all the German parties when compared to the corresponding parties of other countries. But Hitler, as I have already had occasion to mention, has shown himself distinctly inferior to Mussolini in the manipulation of ideas. In this both of them can to a certain extent be regarded as typical of their country. To the average educated Italian terms such as politics, history, state, church, society, nation, race, are far more clearly defined than they are to the average German. It is true that the Germans have produced Karl Marx and Max Weber, from whom educated people throughout the world have learned a great deal, but (to restrict ourselves to recent times only) they have also produced Stefan George and Spengler, whose pseudo-ideas are unthinkable outside the spiritual autarchy of Germany. From the very first Hitler was able to rely on a certain number of pseudo-concepts — blood, honour, destiny and such things — and has been able to make uninterrupted use of them in his propaganda ever since, because they are more mythological than political in nature. But, apart from that, his methods were also unscrupulously empirical. Just as Mussolini, as early as November 1920, abolished the thirteen demagogic points adopted as the programme of the *fasci* in March 1919, Hitler did not respect for long the twenty-five points adopted as the Nazi Party programme in February 1920. 'Would to God that those unfortunate twenty-five points had never been heard of', Goebbels once exclaimed. An excellent starting-point for a study of the transformations of Nazi ideology prior to 1933 would be a little research into the different meanings attributed to the word 'Socialism' in Hitler's propaganda as the Nazi movement gradually developed. It is very significant that both in Italy and Germany the original programmes of the parties in power are banned and unobtainable.

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PROFESSOR PICKUP One thing that does not satisfy me about your way of dealing with the question, Mr. Cynic, is this. By stripping Fascism of all ideas and reducing it to mere practice, you reduce its historical significance to zero.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Don't let that disturb you, professor. The historical significance of events is always independent of the beliefs and emotions of those who take part in them. There is no denying that it is also independent of the vituperations of their victims. The Romans in ancient times and the British in modern times succeeded in founding two powerful empires without a previous plan and almost without realizing it. They acted throughout in a strictly empirical manner, and with very little rhetoric. What will be the historical consequence of Fascism and National-Socialism? On another occasion I shall indulge in dreams about the future and tell you what little I have to say in answer to that question. But what I have said to-day will not in any way prejudice my conclusions.

## DIALOGUE XI

### ON THE DANGERS OF IMPRUDENCE AND OF PLOTS AND REVOLTS WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF THE ARMY AND THE POLICE

PROFESSOR PICKUP Mr. Cynic, don't think I'm disparaging Mr. W. if I say I can't imagine him in the role of a leader of terrorist gangs.

MR. W. Are you daring to insinuate that I'm a coward?

PROFESSOR PICKUP A coward? No. That would not be the right word.

THOMAS THE CYNIC If I am not ill-informed, during the Great War Mr. W. fought with great valour on the Western Front, and on the occasion of a bayonet attack, though wounded, refused all aid until he saw the enemy in flight. At least that is what I read in a pamphlet you yourself gave me, professor.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Alas! I invented that story myself, when my friendship for Mr. W. was still in its first flush. But I can be frank with you now, Mr. Cynic. Mr. W. was wounded a long way behind the front . . .

MR. W. That will do!

THOMAS THE CYNIC Mr. W., don't suspect me of irony if I offer you my heartiest congratulations. If our worthy professor here has, as I hope, now spoken the truth, he has unknowingly revealed yet another characteristic you share with many famous and successful men of action. After reading your war record, I must confess I felt some misgivings about your capacity to lead a civil war. He is a romantic, I said to myself, and will let himself be killed in the first street battle. But I am now entirely reassured. A civil war leader shows his courage only in the icy calm with which he exposes his followers, to say



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nothing of his opponents, to danger without exposing himself. Naturally he must not seem to be so fond of his own skin. In the course of centuries the duties of leaders and led, both in civil and in international wars, have grown increasingly distinct, and one of the consequences is a far greater degree of safety for the leaders. This is an inevitable result of technical developments and of the dimensions that civil and national wars have assumed, but it is not yet entirely admitted to popular consciousness. The average adult still looks up to authority as the child looks up to its parents. What parents would abandon their children in the hour of danger? What children would not be panic-stricken if they were so abandoned? That explains the care with which war propagandists apply themselves to the dramatization of the rare and comfortable visits to the front undertaken by heads of states, with their large retinue of courtiers, journalists and photographers. You will certainly have read newspaper descriptions of kings in the front line inciting their men forward to the attack, of presidents sharing an infantryman's orange in a trench exposed to the enemy barrage and declaring that they have never tasted anything better in their lives; of the sad fate of Prime Ministers' motor cars, which have an uncanny knack of being blown to pieces a few moments after the great men have stepped out of them. The anti-militarist's answer to these legends, the object of which is, of course, to maintain the country's morale, is violent denunciation of generals 'who die in their beds', but both militarists and anti-militarists alike appeal to a mass prejudice which they know to be irreconcilable with the very nature of war. In its own sphere Fascism appeals to mass prejudices in the same way. A true war product, it introduces the methods, uniforms and deceptions of modern warfare into the political arena. Wherever it has succeeded in transforming party conflict into guerrilla warfare it has swiftly established its superiority over its rivals. The latter are essentially peace-time

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armies, led by public speakers (who are not noted for their personal courage) and organized only for paper, electoral battles. The best of the opposing politicians have been unable to adapt themselves to the new conditions and have been known to retire into private life at the outset of the struggle; and the few who stood out and tried to oppose the onslaught of Fascism have cut as ridiculous a figure as if they had gone out to fight in a modern war armed with lance and shield. In the atmosphere in which Fascism establishes itself, the qualities, true or simulated, with which the politicians of the old school adorned themselves and on which their prestige was based — their culture, their experience of public affairs, their tolerant attitude towards their opponents, their contempt or ignorance of business, their aversion to demagoguery, their retired way of life — become objects of popular satire and ridicule. Their denunciations of the new methods of political struggle recall Ariosto's denunciation of the recently-invented arquebus, and provoke the contemptuous laughter of the younger generation. They belong to the pre-war period, but might just as well date back before the Flood. The Fascist leader's qualities are very different. Politically he is a creature of the war, that is, he is a modern man, since with the war 'history began again'. His followers are also survivors of the war, ruined by the armistice and unadapted to ordinary life. His whole programme is a war plan; first of all a civil war plan, for the conquest of power at all costs, then for a foreign war to destroy the external enemy. His tactics for coming into power are war tactics, a combination of violence and propaganda; he practises blackmail among the possessing classes, demagoguery among the poor and systematic terror against his opponents. The relations between him and his followers are also war relations. Leader and led do not hold discussion meetings to exchange ideas; the function of the led is merely to take orders. They are the horse and the leader is the horseman. In a word, all the

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leader's qualities are war qualities, real or simulated, and more often simulated than real.

**PROFESSOR PICKUP** You would not, I hope, cast doubt on Hitler's and Mussolini's war wounds and acts of bravery, Mr. Cynic?

**THOMAS THE CYNIC** In 1914-15 Mussolini was extremely prominent in the campaign for Italian intervention in the war. Many young men were influenced by his propaganda and enlisted voluntarily, but he waited to be called up. He remained at the front for exactly thirty-eight days, and was accidentally wounded at bombing practice behind the lines. As soon as he had recovered he returned to Milan, where he remained in safety until the war was over. Hitler had waited for war with the anxiety of a man who feels suffocated in times of peace. In *Mein Kampf* he describes how during the long, agonizing years of waiting he yearned for the heroic ages when men had made war uninterruptedly.

Why could one not have been born a hundred years sooner? — he wondered. — I often reflected bitterly about my earthly voyage, which, in my opinion, had started too late, and I considered the period of calm and order which I saw opening out before me as an unmerited blow of fate.

It is therefore readily intelligible that the outbreak of war should have seemed to him a special act of kindness on the part of Providence, intended for his peculiar benefit.

Those hours seemed to me like a consolation for the pitiful impressions of my youth — he wrote. — I do not blush to repeat it to-day. Overwhelmed by a tremendous enthusiasm, I fell on my knees and thanked heaven, my heart overflowing with gratitude.

When he volunteered he was at first rejected as unfit, but was later accepted and employed as an orderly at regimental headquarters. He thus had no opportunity of taking part in any

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direct fighting, and it seems that his Iron Cross of the First Class was awarded him because of an altogether exceptional incident of which there is no trace in the history of his regiment and of which none of his fellow-soldiers have any recollection. But what does it matter? There is no need whatever for a Fascist leader to be a brave man. On the contrary, it is essential that the spirit of prudence and self-preservation should not desert him for a single instant, because it is impossible to achieve power if you die in the process, and it is well known that a live rabbit is better than a dead emperor. To rouse the enthusiasm of the masses and to intimidate the opposition it is necessary to have the reputation of being a brave man, intrepid in the face of danger and ready at any moment to make the supreme sacrifice in the cause of patriotism and civilization. I said *reputation*. Once more it is a question of intelligent propaganda. If the myth of the Fascist leader's courage gains a foothold among the masses and among his opponents, it is entirely natural that he should end by genuinely believing it himself and really becoming a brave man. From that moment, however, he is faced with dangers that may lead him to ruin. With your permission, Mr. W., I wish to warn you against them now.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Before you go any farther, Mr. Cynic, I should like to point out to you how you disparage and belittle every sacred thing. I have no hope of convincing you, I merely point these things out to you because my conscience forbids me to be silent. In the civil war waged by Fascism there is something of the *justum ac pium bellum*, the just and pious war of which Livy and Cicero spoke. It is a religious war. The Fascist leader's heroism does not necessarily reside in his physical courage, which is the most primitive and plebeian form of courage; it is a creative, sacramental courage, disposing of the life and death of others. It may well be accompanied by a certain timidity, I might almost say a certain shame, which at times the vulgar might mistake for cowardice, because the

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leader's way of self-sacrifice is entirely spiritual. The Fascist leader rightly attributes importance to remaining physically inviolate and appreciates the necessity of his own survival, because he must fulfil his mission. He must give the masses, brutalized by materialism, a heroic reason for dying for someone. If the hero disappears, the people is orphaned and reverts to the degrading banality of democratic life. Thus the function of the Fascist leader in our time is that of the philosopher or founder of a religion in times gone by; it is to familiarize men with death. Philosophy has never exercised a direct influence upon the people, and religion has long since lost its former hold. Hence the masses have lost the sense of death, and thrown themselves greedily upon the contemptible pleasures of life and the filthy lucre which renders them accessible. All social disorder, my friends, derives from that. The social order cannot be lastingly re-established, I tell you, unless men, particularly the workers, revert to seeing the pale image of death perpetually at their side. That is the whole meaning of the Fascist slogan, 'to live dangerously'. The fundamental weakness of democracy and Socialism in our time is that they are only ideals of life. But what is the use of ideals of life in warlike times such as ours? Obviously only to increase the number of deserters. In a civil war, if an encounter takes place between a crowd of Socialists and a small band of Fascists, the former naturally takes to flight, being composed of individuals educated by their leaders for life and not for death. What role does the thought of death play in democratic and Socialist ideologies? None, none whatever. Both are purely political ideologies that give no guidance on the destiny of man. How can you expect men voluntarily to face death if they have only been taught to live, and, what is more, to live comfortably?

MR. W. Don't exaggerate, professor. You know there have been heroes in all parties, even democratic and Socialist parties.

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PROFESSOR PICKUP I am well aware of it, but I doubt whether in the last resort their party ideology helped them to make the supreme sacrifice. Their party ideology contained no references to death. Those who did not act out of despair were most probably comforted in their last moments by some old philosophic or religious notion, dating back to their pre-political youth. Fascism, which is the frank exaltation of heroic sacrifice on the part of the masses, is very different.

Only War — Mussolini has said — brings all the energies of man to their maximum tension and impresses the mark of nobility on the peoples who have the courage to face it.

In the article on Fascist doctrine he contributed to *The Italian Encyclopaedia* Mussolini gives the following definition of his movement.

Above all, Fascism, as regards its general approach to the future and the development of humanity, believes neither in the possibility nor in the utility of perpetual peace.

On another occasion he added:

War is for man what motherhood is for woman. I do not believe in perpetual peace. On the contrary, I believe that it depresses and negates the essential virtues of man, which are only fully revealed in bloodthirsty effort.

Just now, when I declared myself a little sceptical about Mr. W.'s capacity for leading terrorist gangs, I was not thinking of his physical courage, which I know not to be excessive, though that, I repeat, I do not consider to be so vitally important. I was thinking rather of his absolute lack of the sacramental sense of sacrifice. As long as he could count on my collaboration, he could draw on Neo-Sociology, which I had generously put at his disposal, to his heart's content. But if we part I feel that fortune will not smile upon him for long. I confess that I shall regret it deeply, because I shall miss the philosopher's greatest

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satisfaction; which is to see his system consecrated by hecatombs of martyrs. But, unfortunately, Mr. W. has no idea of the vital importance of sacrifice in the Fascist conception of the world. And to think that a glimmering of that fundamental truth even dawned on Karl Marx when he described force as the midwife of history!

THOMAS THE CYNIC The midwife of history, not the mother. It is easy to show that Fascist violence did not bring a new society to light but rather sought to kill the embryo of the new society which capitalism had conceived within its womb. In other words, it was not a birth but a tragic abortion.

MR. W. Please let us leave gynaecology and get back to politics.

PROFESSOR PICKUP *Vita hominis militia est.* The life of man is a struggle. Heroism is never useless, even if its utility is not of a material order. From heroism myths are born. But even if heroism is unrecorded it bears its own recompense within itself. In this sense Fascism has revealed itself as even purer and more disinterested than Christianity, because when the Christian martyr dies for his faith he does so in the confident belief that he is making a certain and highly profitable bargain, the renunciation of earthly life being more than compensated for in his imagination by his expectation of eternal bliss. The Fascist martyr, on the other hand, has no super-terrestrial hopes. His faith is more sublime than that of the Christian. He gives his life for his leader as one gives a rose to a woman from whom one has nothing to hope. What has the Fascist *squadrista* or the Nazi stormtrooper who lays down his life for his leader to hope for in the next life? Nothing. Nothing whatever. Nevertheless, he does not fear death, and dies with a smile on his lips.

MR. W. My dear fellow, you bore me to death. You know I am not interested in art for art's sake. My digestion is good, my blood pressure is normal, my lungs are healthy, my urine is free of albumen and my appendix has already been removed.

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Consequently I frankly admit that I have no religious sense of death. If ever I have to resort to violence to get into power, it will be violence pure and unadorned.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Are you thinking of taking a rifle and fighting yourself?

MR. W. I shall send my followers.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Why should your followers fight to put you in power instead of somebody else?

MR. W. They will be paid. If I win they will get jobs.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Do you think there will be many men ready to fight a long and bloodthirsty civil war for money only? What will be the use of money to them if they are killed?

MR. W. It won't be the first time. That is the destiny of mercenaries.

PROFESSOR PICKUP You are very much mistaken, Mr. W. That is your weakness. You do not know men. Even the least of mercenaries has to have some illusion when he lays down his life for his paymaster. Otherwise, when danger threatened, he would take the money and disappear, or go over to the enemy. You cannot possibly organize a civil war unless you give your followers a decent motive for dying, a viaticum into the kingdom of nothing.

MR. W. And what drug do you suggest for my followers?

THOMAS THE CYNIC Nothing, Mr. W., NOTHING, but with an adequate liturgy. A religious and sacramental nothing, a pure, perfect and disinterested nothing; the self-sacrifice of a life that in a nostalgic moment rejoins its creator and returns to the unformed. The ideal recruits for our contemporary impresarios of terror are the defeated in life, those for whom existence has no more meaning or value, who yet refrain from suicide because their despair is not purely individual, because they feel themselves buoyed up and spurred on by a vitality that needs to be employed for some unusual object. Fascism for them is a kind of nihilistic drug. Money and drink can certainly be useful



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auxiliaries to attract them, but in street-fighting their performance depends on something else. Money and drink existed before the war, when mass phenomena such as the Fascist *squadristi* and the Nazi stormtroopers would have been absolutely inconceivable. In those days the requisite human material was lacking. Men still had confidence in their ideals of life. I know I am repeating myself, but repetition helps. Fascism, with its violence, its terrorism and its liturgy of death, was made possible by the war and the consequences of the war in certain countries, the bankruptcy of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, of capitalism and anti-capitalism, of monarchies and democracy, of religion and atheism. As a German Catholic writer observed: 'In a time without mind and in a state of unprecedented spiritual helplessness only he could win the political race who could carry out the total organization of mindlessness and spiritual helplessness.'

MR. W. It seems to me that you mistake the means for the end. The politician aspires to nothing but power. The means for gaining power change with the times, and it would be foolish to reject the means while still aspiring to the end.

THOMAS THE CYNIC But is power a means or an end, Mr. W.? Many consider it a means with which to serve society, or a part of society. But you talk of it as an end in itself, as the politician's only goal. Is money a means or an end? Many consider it a means, but for the miser it is an end. Even the means of production, as the expression itself indicates, should only be a means, though in fact it exercises a tyrannical domination over society. In other words, Mr. W., the relations between ends and means are less simple than you think. After all, they themselves change, and there is no greater condemnation of our civilization than the fact that it results in means becoming ends, while the true end, which is man himself, has become a means — no doubt a more expensive one than a dog, but cheaper than a cow or a machine-gun. Speaking generally, one may say

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that every means tends to become an end. To understand the tragedy of human history it is necessary to grasp that fact. Machines, which ought to be man's instrument, enslave him, the state enslaves society, the bureaucracy enslaves the state, the church enslaves religion, parliament enslaves democracy, institutions enslave justice, academies enslave art, the army enslaves the nation, the party enslaves the cause, the dictatorship of the proletariat enslaves Socialism. The choice and the control of the instruments of political action are thus at least as important as the choice of the ends themselves, and as time goes on the instruments must be expected to become an end for those who use them. Hence the saying that the end justifies the means is not only immoral; it is stupid. An inhuman means remains inhuman even if it is employed for the purpose of assuring human felicity. A lie is always a lie, murder is always murder. A lie always ends by enslaving those who use it, just as violence always enslaves those who use it as well as their victims. What is the story of Fascism but that of an instrument which became an end in itself and imposed itself upon those who wanted to use it?

MR. W. Who wanted to use it?

THOMAS THE CYNIC In Italy and Germany all the old institutions which felt themselves menaced by popular discontent. All of them, without any exceptions whatever, encouraged it, financed it and helped to smooth its path, believing they would be able to use it as a political tool, at home and abroad, and then cast it aside. The wealthy bourgeoisie, the landlords and the generals, both in Italy and Germany, intended to use Fascist violence solely to reimpose discipline upon the workers, eliminate any danger of Communism and bring the representatives of the old bourgeois parties back to power. The extent to which their intentions were fulfilled is plain for all to see. Fascism did not remain a very docile instrument in their hands.

PROFESSOR PICKUP You said before that Fascism had from

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the first to fight a battle on two fronts: against the old state on the one hand and the workers' organizations on the other. In its struggle for power it was thus forced to use violence against everybody.

THOMAS THE CYNIC In a society in a state of crisis the democratic state is paralysed by its legality and by the conflicting influence of the parliamentary parties. In such a situation ever more important sections of the bureaucracy and the army cease to obey the central government and support the Fascist party, which usurps the most delicate functions of government, constitutes itself a state within the state, proclaims its intention of overthrowing the old and incompetent governing class and takes direct terroristic action against its enemies. The army's contribution to the foundation of Italian and German Fascism is the key to the subsequent relations between Fascism and the state, and the Fascists' overwhelming superiority over their opponents. Let me remind you of a few details. Immediately after the war, when Italy was in a state of profound political agitation, which looked as if it were going to be too much for the Radical Democratic Government, the War Ministry sent a colonel, an expert on civil war problems, on a tour of the various divisional headquarters, to instruct them what to do in the event of a Communist insurrection. The colonel submitted a report, which was later published, and in it he pointed out the necessity of *fasci* in addition to the army. You will find a summary of his report in an accurate and conscientious book by A. Rossi, *La naissance du fascisme*, from which I shall quote you the following:

There must be added to the conscripts, to the 250,000 mercenaries whom we shall soon have at our disposal, a militia of idealists, formed of the most expert, the most courageous, the bravest and most aggressive among us, to support and better to regulate their action. This militia must be capable of defensive action and at the same time

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of political action, so that in this difficult period it may restore blood, life and unity to the national forces and lead them to victory.

After insisting on the necessity of a unified military and political command the colonel proceeded to give some tactical advice. It was necessary, he stated,

to form squads, companies, battalions, or at least their framework, to which the capable elements of our class would be obliged to belong. The inexperienced would be trained by passing successively from the simplest to the most difficult tasks . . . Partial actions, destined to check-mate the insolence of the most subversive centres, will be an excellent school for our militia, and will at the same time help to demoralize and break the enemy. The precaution must always be taken, however, of having several bases of operation at one's disposal, both to start out from and to assemble the necessary material. These bases must be at a sufficient distance from the place where one intends to strike to be able to return to them without rousing suspicion and to be able to reorganize in case of a temporary check. Such is the method to be employed in the event of local punitive action being taken.

A few months later the ex-Socialist Bonomi, Minister of War in Giolitti's 'Liberal' cabinet, sent a circular to divisional headquarters which was also later published in the Press. This circular instructed officers on the point of demobilization, numbering about sixty thousand, to proceed to the most important centres under orders to join Mussolini's *fasci*. As compensation they were to receive four-fifths of their ordinary pay. Let us pass to Germany. Heiden states in his *History of National-Socialism*:

In so far as it is a political movement Nazism was conceived by the Munich Reichswehr and forged with the aid of the latter by Adolf Hitler and Captain Ernst Röhm. That took place in 1921.

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As far back as 1923 — Heiden also states — the Reichswehr and the police formed the backbone of the National Socialist movement . . . Germany then swarmed with *Freikorps*. There was the Ehrhardt brigade, the Baltic Landswehr, the *Jäger* corps of Heydebreck, the *Freikorps* of Pfeffer, Rossbach, Loewenfeld, Lützow, Lichtschlag, Chiemgau, Oberland and Epp. A little later the greatest of these was formed; the Bavarian *Einwohnerwehr*, from which the Escherich organization was born (known as the Orgesch), which had ramifications throughout Germany. It was these armed companies that in the following years supplied the first members of the Nazi Party.

Hitler's first political training was received in the Reichswehr, which gave him a course of political instruction immediately after the armistice. It was here that he absorbed most of the leading ideas which were so useful to him later — among others, the fundamental notion that the consent of the masses is always the result of the simultaneous employment of propaganda and violence. Finally, I may also remind you that military collaboration can be traced in the history of dictatorships in all places and at all times.

MR. W. I must point out that in America we have unfortunately not yet reached that point. I have a few army officers with me, but the help I get from them is scanty and, I believe, unknown to the authorities.

THOMAS THE CYNIC If that is the case, it means that the times are not yet ripe, Mr. W., because it is absolutely inconceivable for a Fascist movement to gain a foothold and make real progress unless the nation is in a state of organic crisis, with consequent independent action on the part of the organs of the state, particularly those with the most conservative political outlook. These are generally the police, the army and the magistracy.

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PROFESSOR PICKUP You cannot deny that both in Italy and Germany the state authorities vigorously opposed the advance of Fascism. Special laws were made and all sorts of steps taken. But they were useless, for the well-known reason that police measures have never yet been able to prevent a revolution.

THOMAS THE GYNIC There is a certain element of truth in that, professor. It is true that both in Italy and Germany, as a result of pressure by Parliament and the democratic and Socialist parties, a whole series of special laws was passed, aimed at disarming the Fascists, dissolving their military formations and avoiding bloodshed in the streets. But there is one detail that you must not overlook. The application of the democratic government's laws, decrees, orders and memoranda was entrusted in both countries to a police, an army and a magistracy which were largely under Fascist influence. Hence, the anti-Fascist laws at best remained a dead letter. Generally, however, they were conscientiously applied against the anti-Fascists. There is no need to give you examples, because you will find them *ad nauseam* in every record of post-war events in Italy or Germany. If any proof were still needed, the experience we have had of 'democratic' anti-Facist legislation would be sufficient to prove that laws in themselves are worth nothing, and are liberal or anti-liberal only according to the way in which they are applied. Therefore, Mr. W., you must see that at decisive moments you have important sections of the police, the army and the magistracy with you, and then you will be able to laugh at the laws that Congress will vote in defence of public order and democratic liberties. For, in spite of their 'anti-Fascist' inspiration, those laws will serve you well by disarming your opponents, terrorizing them, dissolving their organizations, prohibiting their meetings, imprisoning their members, and thus materially assisting you in your progress towards the White House. Of course there may always be surprises in a civil war, but if Fascism can count on the good-

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will and support of the state authorities it has an advantage which will nearly always be decisive. Until it has that support Fascism must be patient and wait.

**PROFESSOR PICKUP** In my opinion the superiority of Fascism resides in the very nature of the violence it carries out, in accordance with the enlightened plans of its leaders. Fascist violence, Mussolini has said, is surgical, healing, beneficent and controlled. It is inevitably victorious over Bolshevik violence, which is blind, sterile, anarchical and destructive.

**THOMAS THE CYNIC** The representation of one's opponents as cruel, cowardly and sadistic monsters who avoid honourable methods of fighting and satisfy their bestial instincts for choice on women, children and the aged has always been an invaluable weapon of war propagandists, and it has been directly inherited from them by the modern propagandists of civil war. There is a whole literature on the Bolshevik terror and the Fascist terror drawn up according to the recipes of war propaganda. They are old methods now, and have often been exposed, but they are still effective, because human credulity is almost inexhaustible. Credulity is the only raw material that no country has any need to import. The story of the Belgian children mutilated by German soldiers in the war is exactly on a par with that of the firing of the Reichstag by the Communists. Propaganda about enemy atrocities makes the task of judging the war conduct of an army, or the civil war conduct of a party, extremely difficult, though it does not render the task superfluous. The fact that in modern armed conflicts the old laws and customs of war have fallen out of use, partly as a consequence of the general moral decline but partly also as an inevitable result of the new technical methods of aggression, make the task more difficult still. It is impossible, for instance, to bomb a station or a harbour and distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, just as it is impossible to bomb a hostile procession and distinguish between grown-ups

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and children, between hostile militants and curious onlookers or casual passers-by. One cannot therefore condemn the results without condemning the means and renouncing their employment. But such a thing would be irreconcilable with the very notion of war.

The new technique of war is . . . built upon the idea of terror . . . the idea behind this new technique of war is to turn the enemy mad, at least temporarily so,

Major-General Fuller wrote in all sincerity in his book, *The First of the League Wars*. Terror is terror when no kind of violence is excluded, and no rules, laws or customs are recognized. Political opponents raid your house, and you do not know what to expect. Will they arrest you or shoot you or simply beat you up? Will they set fire to your house or kidnap your wife and children or content themselves with cutting off your arms? Or will they blind you or cut off your ears or simply throw you out of the window? You do not and you cannot know. Terror has no laws or rules. Its aim is only to terrorize. Its object is less the physical extermination of a certain number of opponents than the moral destruction of the majority of them. It aims at maddening them, stupefying them, intimidating them, depriving them of the last ounce of human dignity. Those who are responsible for this cease to be normal men. The most effective and frequent acts of violence under a reign of terror are actually those which would seem the most 'useless', the most superfluous, the most unintelligible, the most unnecessary. . . .

MR. W. At Buenos Ayres I was told about an Argentinian dictator, the celebrated De Rosas, who had an inventive genius worthy of a great artist in this respect. One morning, for example, a number of fruit-sellers appeared in the streets, calling out 'Peaches! Peaches!' When customers approached to buy the baskets were opened and were seen to contain newly



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decapitated human heads. De Rosas seems to have introduced the greatest possible simplification into his penal system. He examined the charge-sheets himself, but did not waste much time over them, merely writing '*cuchillo*' (knife) or '*bala*' (bullet) in the margin as he felt inclined.

THOMAS THE CYNIC De Rosas gloried in the title of 'Restorer of the laws', Mr. W., and the slogan his followers shouted was 'Long live the Holy Federation and may the filthy unitarian savages perish'. His ferocity is now generally disapproved of, but the priests of his time, who frequently sang solemn *Te Deums* in his honour in the churches, probably regarded him as a special envoy of Providence. But that kind of weakness is not confined to the Church. The violence of one's opponents naturally appears ferocious, cowardly and inhuman, whereas that of one's own side, even if it takes the same forms, seems brave, heroic and idealistic. Thus *nomina perdidimus rerum*, we forget the names of things. We tend to do this at all times, but terrorism completes the process. I need not enlarge on this subject with you. But it may be as well to point out some more advantages which the Fascists have over their opponents. One big difference between them is in social composition. On the one hand are the mass political parties, which in practice are nothing but huge electoral organizations; on the other, small groups of professional terrorists whose favourite policy is sudden *coups* and surprise attacks.

The masses — Mussolini has written — are naturally, I might even say sacredly pacifist, because they always represent the static reserves of human society, while risk, danger, taste for adventure have always been the duty and privilege of small aristocracies.

That is true as regards the working masses. The organization of the more advanced section of the working class takes place on the basis of a voluntary selection, in which courage, a sense

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of social solidarity and a spirit of self-sacrifice often play an important part; but these are not always accompanied by a mental and technical inclination for an armed struggle in the streets. The Fascist movement, on the other hand, is primarily military. It is organized by officers and joined by ex-service-men. Instead of being trained at discussion meetings it is systematically drilled and exercised in the use of arms, and, at any rate in the early stages, is built up round arms dumps instead of co-operatives, trade unions and bookshops. Even when, after much delay, attempts have been made to oppose the Fascist gangs with organized anti-Fascist militias consisting chiefly of factory workers, the latter, by reason of their very social composition, have invariably turned out to be inferior to their Fascist opponents in the practice of terrorism. One must bear in mind that the worker in a big factory may easily be brave and courageous in mass actions, whether pacific or violent, but he is generally entirely unsuited to acting by himself or in a small group. If you consult the record of the frequent Socialist and anarchist assassinations that took place in various countries, including your own, towards the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth, you will find that they were the work of intellectuals, generally students, artisans or peasants. If you happen to find a factory worker among them you will probably discover that he was an ex-peasant or an ex-artisan. The factory worker is *par excellence* a mass-man, accustomed to *zusammenmarschieren*, to marching with others. It was no accident that Fascism encountered armed resistance and suffered the heaviest losses in areas where large-scale industry did not exist and where the workers worked in small establishments. Compare the different attitudes of the Spanish and German workers in the face of Fascism. Differences in national temperament may partly account for them, but it is undeniable that the development of large-scale industry has strengthened rather than weakened the tendency of the

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Germans, including the German workers, to *zusammenmarschieren*. Party struggles in Germany were essentially struggles between party apparatuses, and individual initiative was practically nil. Another factor which helps to explain the bewilderment of the factory workers in the face of Fascist aggression — and not in Germany only — is that many of them, being engaged in the manufacture of munitions or in transport and other vital industries, were exempted from war-service, even in countries which had conscription, and it was these who formed the backbone of the workers' organizations after the war. Not having been through the war, even if they had extreme opinions, an abyss divided them from the Fascists. They gave the impression of being men of different races.

The Nazi movement originated in a circle in which political crime was the rule — Heiden has written. — This was the circle of conspirators assembled by Roehm, who was the instigator in Bavaria of a whole series of terrorist attempts, the perpetrators of which were never discovered because the circle sheltered them with its protection.

In February 1920, Mussolini was forced to appear before a court of honour in Milan to answer charges made by two former members of the staff of his paper. Among other things, he was accused of having formed terrorist gangs 'composed of mercenary elements summoned from Fiume and other cities of Italy, paid thirty lire a day, plus expenses, and organized for purposes of intimidation and violence'. Mussolini admitted the facts, and told the court that 'there were in all several hundred men, divided into squads commanded by officers, and, of course, they all obeyed me. I was a kind of leader of this little army'. In the city of Milan alone there were thus several hundred mercenaries who went about in groups of three and had nothing else to do from morning to night than to watch their opponents, molest them and prepare to carry out attacks

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upon them, being well paid for all this and with immunity assured by the police. The different social composition of the rival forces also resulted in a different technique of defence and attack. The Fascist technique rapidly proved its superiority to that of its opponents. After every Fascist outrage the workers' organizations replied by organizing a protest meeting or a local general strike, according to the gravity of the affair. Either would cause a good deal of trouble to the authorities and the local population, but none whatever to the Fascists. There might have been sense in these mass actions if they had been used for some democratic purpose, such as demanding workers' representation in the Government, for instance, or insisting on a reversal of the process of Fascist infiltration into the State apparatus; or, while the situation remained a revolutionary one, if they had been used to support direct action aimed at the conquest of the State. As it was, however, they were planned and carried out solely for the purposes of protest and intimidation, and as such they failed completely. In fact, they achieved exactly the opposite of what they were intended to achieve. The disorganization and inconvenience that resulted from the continual strikes ended by alienating the sympathies of ever larger sections of the population, and the workers themselves gradually became demoralized and struck in smaller and smaller numbers. When the anti-Fascists organized themselves into small bands and procured arms to answer violence with violence the police intervened to disarm, arrest and prosecute them. Hence, when the Fascists passed from individual attempts to collective expeditions, they were faced only with an unarmed multitude from which the combative elements had been previously eliminated. The Fascists, therefore, had magnificent opportunities of displaying the most sensational heroism. As Fascist influence increased, the support of the military authorities became more open and direct, and the Fascists were therefore easily able to replenish their supplies of

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arms and move their men from place to place in lorries and special trains. Tens of thousands of armed men were put on a war footing to subdue the last cities in which the opponents of the Fascists were still able to hold free meetings and publish their papers.

MR. W. Is it true that there were many ex-Communists among the German stormtroopers and the Italian *squadristi*?

THOMAS THE CYNIC In Italy very few Communists went over to Fascism, and in any case such conversions were strictly individual. You must not forget that Mussolini came into power in October 1922, and that the Communist Party, which had been in existence for barely a year, although it was bloodily beaten in the civil war in Italy, had not yet passed through the demoralizing internal crises which were to come later. In Germany between 1930 and 1933 whole groups went over bag and baggage from the militant Communist organization to the Brownshirts. To understand that phenomenon a rapid sketch of its political causes is necessary. When one looks back now on the policy of the Communist International in Germany before 1933, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that it was a precious and indispensable aid to Hitler's victory. From 1926 to 1929, when world economy was on the up-grade, the Communist International decided that capitalist society had entered 'the Third Period' of its fatal decline, a period of new revolutions and proletarian insurrections, during which the activities of the Communist parties should be concentrated on the fomenting of general strikes and the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. In other countries the significance of the frequent political 'turns' of the Communist International was only journalistic, but Germany was the real trial ground of Moscow's tactics. The fantastic theory of 'the Third Period' and the imminence of a new revolutionary cycle led to feverish activity among the German Communists, who set themselves to the systematic provocation of obvious and

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resounding revolutionary acts. Since the German factory workers showed themselves refractory, the Communists, with the vast resources then at their disposal, proceeded to mobilize the unemployed. The party 'theoreticians' believed themselves to be punishing the factory workers, who were openly hostile to the new tactics, by deciding that in the new period the true motive force of the revolution consisted of the unemployed, while the workers still at work constituted an integral part of the so-called 'working-class aristocracy'. The militant organization of the Communist Party applied itself to provoking 'spontaneous' demonstrations and 'hunger marches' of the unemployed, and evolved a whole strategy for use in the 'spontaneous' conflicts between the unemployed and the police, who were then controlled by the Social-Democrats. *Oktober*, the politico-military review of the Communist Party, collected and analysed reports and drew up new rules for the experiences gained in this cold-blooded guerrilla warfare, and published detailed technical instructions on how to provoke 'spontaneous' demonstrations, disarm individual policemen, stop lorry-loads of police reinforcements, etc. The slogan 'Strike the Fascists where you meet them!' was issued, and not a day passed without bloody clashes between the rival military formations. Party premises were set fire to and meetings raided by bands of armed men. These tactics reached their climax with the 'spontaneous' sacking of food shops by groups of unemployed. From the Communist point of view, there would be little to criticize in all this if its premise, the famous theory of 'the Third Period', had been correct, and if the unemployed had been actively supported by the factory workers and had had the sympathy of other popular groups. As it was, however, the results for the Communist Party were disastrous, and when the economic crisis set in in 1929 it found itself isolated, not only from the workers who were still at work but also from the majority of the unemployed, who were tired and disillusioned

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as a result of the non-appearance of the long-promised revolution. In 1930 the Communist Party made another 'turn' to try and recover the ground it had lost. Its previous tactics were harshly condemned, and its members reverted to the policy of trying to gain the votes of the masses, including those of the despised 'working-class aristocracy'. It was then that entire sections of the militant Communist organization went over to the Nazis, soon adding new laurels to their old ones by practising 'spontaneous' raids on the premises of their former colleagues. It was a real surprise for the people of Berlin one day to see the characteristic drum-and-fife bands of the Communists marching past in brown shirts. In North Germany it was difficult to find a stormtrooper who did not come from the ranks of the Communist Party. Moreover, Communist tactics were destined still further to assist Nazi recruiting among the working class. The new slogans suggested by Moscow were 'Struggle against Social-Fascism!' (by which term Social-Democracy and reformist trade unionism was meant.) 'First we must destroy Social-Democracy and then Fascism!' The Communist Party tried to stem Nazi progress among the workers by competing with it in demagogic appeals, denouncing the Young Plan and the Treaty of Versailles just like Hitler. And they went one better than Hitler by demanding that the Italians be turned out of the Southern Tyrol, which Hitler could not do. This coincidence of political formulas gave plenty of opportunities for fraternization, for instance in the plebiscite against the Social-Democratic Government in Prussia, the initiative for which came from the Nazis. It was at first denounced as a demagogic 'stunt' by the German Communists, but later they supported it by order of Moscow, justifying this change of front by the slogan that before Fascism could be beaten it was first necessary to pass over the putrefying corpse of democracy. Groups of Communists and Nazis were to be seen together on this occasion, in the streets and in the courtyards of working-

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class tenements, loudly calling upon everybody to vote against the Social-Democratic Government. Another opportunity for fraternization occurred in Berlin in 1932, during the big transport strike, in which Nazis and Communists took an active part. Henceforward the Brownshirts were able to circulate freely in working-class districts, and the abyss which had appeared to separate the proletariat from the Nazis seemed to have been bridged. The belief that the overthrow of democratic institutions, even at the hands of Fascism, would inevitably be favourable to the cause of Communism was so deeply rooted in the minds of the followers of Moscow that when Hitler came into power at the beginning of 1933 the first comments of the Communist Press did not record that event for what it was, namely a grave defeat, but hailed it as a great step forward towards the final victory of the proletariat.

MR. W. It is a pity, it really is a pity, that the Communist Party in America is so weak! If instead of wasting our time being bored to death in Rome and Berlin we had only gone to Moscow — oh, extremely aggravating Professor Pickup! — we should probably have persuaded Stalin to try to wake up the American Communist Party. How am I to save America from the peril of Bolshevism if it does not exist?

PROFESSOR PICKUP Next year we shall go to Moscow if you like. But what puzzles me now is to find the explanation for such extraordinary behaviour. Why should the Russians intervene in the German civil war at the expense of the Weimar Republic and in favour of the Third Reich? And why should the general staff and police of a democratic state assist Fascism when democracy is in danger? Perhaps this thought of Pareto's will suggest an answer:

Like other collective groups, governing classes perform logical and illogical actions. The principal factor in the phenomenon is the organization, and not the conscious will of individuals, who in certain cases can be led by the



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organization where their conscious will would never take them.

THOMAS THE CYNIC The same thing had already been said by Karl Marx, professor, and in less mysterious terms. Human institutions obey other impulses than those of the individual psychology of their controllers. Authoritarian institutions, and the interests they represent, may be in violent conflict. Nevertheless, however violent that conflict may be, the conflict between them and liberty will override it; and in face of a common danger, they will always find ways and means of helping one another, in accordance with the popular saying that dog doesn't eat dog.

MR. W. Mr. Cynic, do you think it would be prudent to give the military the impression that when the State is in an advanced state of crisis the success of my movement will depend so much on their support? If the part they play is so decisive, might they not be tempted to do without me, and impose a purely military dictatorship on the country?

THOMAS THE CYNIC Don't let that worry you, Mr. W. There is no such danger in an advanced country. Speaking generally, military dictatorships are possible in socially backward countries, countries, that is to say, in which a real modern bourgeoisie does not exist, or is weak, unorganized, divided into numerous *clientèles*, while the relics of feudalism are still strong and the army constitutes the most powerful political organization in the country and the only centralized organization with ramifications covering the whole area of the State. In such a country the army constitutes the only barrier against the so-called 'anarchy' of the popular masses and the 'corruption' of the politicians, and, when it wishes to do so, it can seize power without much difficulty. The only danger that the promoters of a military *pronunciamento* have to fear is disagreement within the army itself, and the possibility of jealousies between rival generals. They have nothing to fear from the

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ordinary political parties; a telephone message from the nearest barracks is generally sufficient to bring them to heel. But the path that Fascism has to tread is much more thorny. Fascism arises in socially advanced countries, from the decay of the old party system, and has to struggle for years before the battle is decided. As I have said, it is greatly helped by a section of the higher army officers, but they have to act with discretion, and can only side openly with Fascism when the result of the struggle seems already to have been decided. You must remember that in advanced countries it is more difficult than in backward countries to use the army for political purposes. Since you have chosen North and not South America as the stage for your political career, you must not expect a general to put whole regiments at your disposal. You may, perhaps, receive arms, the disappearance of which from the arsenals will be registered by those responsible as 'theft by persons unknown'. Individual officers may even join your movement. But that is all. In a modern state politics is not the privilege of a restricted caste of politicians. The participation of the masses in political life is reflected even in the army, where both officers and men often have entirely different political creeds. That is a serious obstacle to the setting up of a military dictatorship in a modern state. Besides, a military dictatorship would be entirely incapable of even temporarily solving the political problem underlying the crisis. A military dictatorship can carry out the purely negative function of suspending the party struggle and waiting for minds to cool before the restoration of an earlier regime. That is to say, it can fulfil a purely conservative and moderating function. But if the conflict between the parties is not only of a psychological character, if there are serious political, economic or social problems to be faced, a military dictatorship is helpless. It is incapable even of the apparent solutions in which Fascism glories. But in a grave constitutional crisis the intervention of the army can be

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decisive even in the most advanced countries, in my opinion, if its leaders do not commit the indiscretion of letting the army intervene directly. They can resolve the crisis, but only by hiding behind a political party.

MR. W. Thank you. That explanation is a great relief to me. One more question, please. If Fascism and Nazism were actively supported by the army leaders from the very first, why did they have to struggle so long (I am now thinking particularly of Hitler) before gaining power?

THOMAS THE CYNIC You know that an accentuated lack of political intelligence has always been considered an indispensable qualification of the true militarist. In spite of that, their instinct compensating for their lack of intelligence, the soldiers who helped Fascism most grew suspicious and distrustful when they realized by what methods, in what company and with what an appetite Fascism was making its way to power. In spite of their co-operation, distrust between the Fascists and the army arose. It could be summed up in the question which would make use of the other. Hitler's intentions at the beginning of the Nazi movement were to march in the Reichswehr's shadow, to be to a certain extent its propagandist and political counsellor. When, flattered by his early successes, he tried to make independent headway and to force the Reichswehr to follow him by confronting it with *faits accomplis*, his disillusionment was extreme. The Reichswehr refused its support. The *pulches* of May 1st, 1923, and of November 9th, of the same year, were miserable failures, and for a time Hitler even thought of taking his own life.

PROFESSOR PICKUP The distinction that you are trying to make seems to me to boil down to a difference of temperament. Professional soldiers are calm, cool and prudent, while the Fascist leader is by nature romantic. I found a magnificent illustration of the contrast between the romantic leader and the professional soldier in Pilsudski's war memoirs. In October

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1924, for example, during the Austrian retreat in Galicia, Pilsudski was ordered to carry out a reconnaissance with his troops. On the way the idea of changing his objective and marching on Cracow occurred to him. Listen to this.

To Cracow? — he wrote — But that is a fortress, it will not fall in a moment, in a day. If one has to die, let it be where our massacre would leave a trace. Not the Elster but the Vistula! To Cracow, then, or further still, to Novy Targ (in the High Tatras) . . . If the hecatomb has to be, at least let it be historic, in the mountains, because voluntarily and independently offered. It will even have a picturesque background.

Well, what do you think of that? Does a professional soldier care about the landscape in which his duty requires him to face death? Later, during the winter, trench warfare was boring Pilsudski intensely, and he once more had the idea of marching to Novy Targ. Listen:

I was resolved — he wrote — to summon the mountaineers to battle, to carry out an offensive-defensive action, and at the worst to seal our fate with a hecatomb giving eternal fame to the Strzelci.

MR. W. How many more times must I repeat that the politician's objective is not death but power? It is useless for a politician to die before attaining power.

THOMAS THE CYNIC One of the most dangerous of the temptations that may lead to disaster the politician who aspires to power, Mr. W., is undoubtedly imprudence. The Fascist leader can never be warned sufficiently against the danger of plots and revolts without the support of the army and the police. Between Hitler's two *putsches* in 1923, the failure of which led him to the edge of despair, he received a memorandum from his friend Scheubner-Richter in which the following wise and profound reflections occurred.

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The national revolution must not anticipate the assumption of political power. The possession of the police-power of the State is the essential preliminary for the national revolution. That means that at least an attempt must be made to get the police power of the State into one's hands in an outwardly legal fashion, though admittedly this legal way must be trod under more or less illegal pressure . . . The more legal it appears outwardly and the more popular feeling there is behind us the less will be the risk.

Hitler did not immediately attach the importance to this piece of advice that it deserved. But he learned by bitter experience. About ten years later, in the spring of 1932, when the leaders of the Brownshirts, and particularly Roehm, urged him strongly to attempt a *putsch*, he refused. The police were still in the hands of his opponents. Later the Nazis had the choice of two tactics in Austria, either that of the *putsch* or that of the ultimatum preceded by the *internal* conquest of the enemy's key positions. The results are plain for all to see, and there can be no doubt which method is the superior. Mussolini saw it clearly from the outset. (As an Italian I am not in the least proud of his superiority over Hitler in this respect.) Mussolini never seriously thought of a *putsch*, though he permitted rumours of one to spread, in order to test the reactions of his opponents. The celebrated incident at Sarzana, where five hundred Fascist militiamen, faced by eight carabinieri and three soldiers, took to flight, were chased by the mob and left about a dozen dead and many dozens of wounded on the field, or hanging from the trees or drowned in the water-courses, proved to all those who were not already aware of it, that the real strength of the Fascist gangs, unsupported by the police and the army, was very small. Mussolini, who knew his creature, Fascism, knew it too. He therefore answered no, without hesitation, to the invitation that D'Annunzio sent him from Fiume. To those who reproached him Mussolini answered:

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I personally have never written or told D'Annunzio that the revolution in Italy depended on my whim. A revolution is not a jack-in-the-box which can be released at any moment. History culled from remote facts teaches men little, but the history that is taking place before our eyes ought to be more profitable. This history tells us that revolutions are made with the army and not against the army; with arms and not without arms, with organized ranks and not with amorphous mobs gathered at meetings. Revolutions succeed when they have the sympathy of the majority of the population; without it they shrivel and die.

PROFESSOR PICKUP And what about the March to Rome, Mr. Cynic? How do you reconcile with what you have just been saying the rising of the Fascists in every city of Italy and their warlike March to Rome, which Mussolini has exalted as a perilous feat of arms?

THOMAS THE CYNIC With your permission we shall talk of that another time.



## DIALOGUE XII

ON THE TEMPTATION TO FALL SHORT OF 'THE TOTALITARIAN SPIRIT', AND ON THE DANGERS OF FACTS AND COMPROMISES WITH THE OLD GOVERNING CLASS

PROFESSOR PICKUP How pleasant it is to stroll along the lake-side, in the scented shade of the lime trees, while the sun slowly sets.

MR. W. You cannot imagine how this quiet gets on my nerves. If I were condemned to live in this country, I think I should go mad. Everything is so orderly, quiet and healthy that I think the Swiss must have milk or mineral water in their veins instead of blood.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Many fine spirits, from Goethe to Nietzsche, have loved this landscape, my friend.

MR. W. It makes me feel like a character in a coloured picture-postcard.

THOMAS THE CYNIC A very valuable experience for a future celebrity. After all, what is a celebrity but a man who has become a picture-postcard?

MR. W. In my opinion Switzerland would be the finest country in the world without its mountains. What's the use of such a lot of mountains? I can't see any sense in them at all. Houses and bridges are no longer built of stone but of steel and concrete, and everyone knows it's easy to make ice for highballs in the refrigerator at home.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Don't forget that the Alps constitute this little country's natural defence against foreign attacks.

MR. W. The Maginot Line proves that artificial defences can be even more impressive.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Well, even if they are no good for anything



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else, the Alps help American tourists to distinguish Switzerland from Holland, and that's a great deal.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Here we are at the goal of our evening's walk, gentlemen. The café terrace is crowded. There are some people just about to go. Let us hurry to take their table.

MR. W. Just look at all these people. I don't believe there is any other country in the world where the people look so well-fed and self-satisfied. I cannot imagine anything more hopeless than attempting to set up Fascism here.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Keyserling, in his *Spectral Analysis of Europe*, was very severe on the Swiss, whom he accused of being a nation of hotel-keepers. He denounced their optimistic superficiality and their complete lack of original culture.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Keyserling's book consisted of nothing but a spectral analysis of himself. Life in Swiss grand hotels is as idiotic as it is in grand hotels elsewhere, because the same parasitic public is common to them all. Apart from that, I should have no difficulty in proving that there is more nobility and sincerity in a Grisons peasant than in a Baltic baron.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Your reference to rich parasites sounds false to me, Mr. Cynic. Let us be sincere. Which one of us would not like to live in luxury and idleness?

MR. W. Between ourselves, I may as well confess that I sometimes have moments of black despair, when I long for a ranch in California, a private beach on Long Island and my own racing stable at Saratoga. But such dreams are rare and transitory.

THOMAS THE CYNIC They are treacherous and dangerous, Mr. W. I appreciate your frankness; what you have just said is too human to surprise me. No teetotaller but sometimes dreams of a good glass of wine, no vegetarian but sometimes dreams of a succulent beefsteak. Similarly there are moments when the aspiring dictator feels irresistibly attracted by the mirage of private life, and nothing seems so desirable to him

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as the dream of spending long winter evenings in comfortable slippers by a comfortable fireside, surrounded by children and grandchildren, while the snow falls and the wind whistles outside! That is the third temptation against which I now wish to warn you, Mr. W. I mean the temptation of the philistine life. Its very nature is such that it appears in humble, human forms, not demanding the sacrifice of one's political career, but only the neglected rights of the private man. But the smallest surrender to the temptation of commonplace satisfactions and affections and comforts predisposes the mind to the worst political compromises, and leads to ruin, not only political but private. Like all real temptations, its promises are deceptive. A deaf ear must be turned to its insinuating arguments, and it must be crushed ruthlessly at its first appearance. I always think of it as the last of the temptations to which the devil subjected St. Antony in the desert. You will remember that St. Antony was represented by various medieval painters as surrounded by horrible monsters. But how naive! As if a temptation that inspired fear and repugnance could be effective. It has never been difficult to resist monsters; it is more difficult to resist men. I think of the old hermit lying fever-stricken on a heap of sand. The Evil One presents himself to him in the guise of a pilgrim, and reasons with him like this: 'Poor old man, what a plight you are reduced to! You came into the desert to pray, and now your troubles prevent you from setting your mind on God. You came here to meditate, and fever prevents you from concentrating. Besides, your holiness serves as an example to no one, since there is nobody here to see. Be reasonable, therefore, and consider whether it would not be more in conformity with God's will if you left the desert and returned among men.' The saint saved himself from this temptation, in my opinion, by closing his ears and refusing to argue. A mystical vocation does not admit the arguments of common sense. Absolute love of God is essentially

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inhuman and irrational, and the political vocation, in the extreme form represented by the Fascist leader, is of the same nature. Politics become his predominant and ruling passion, to the exclusion of all else. It is a bad sign if a vague longing for private life, as it is lived by ordinary men and by political dilettantes, finds a lodging in the Fascist leader's mind. But console yourself, Mr. Cynic, I know no Fascist leader who has been entirely immune from it.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Every exceptional vocation is inhuman. The chosen vessels are always men at heart, and it is only with difficulty that they resign themselves to their hard lot.

THOMAS THE CYNIC In 1922, when the *Volkische Beobachter* was still a weekly, with a slowly growing circulation of about twenty thousand, Hitler wrote to some friends:

I do not require much from life. It would be sufficient for me for the movement to last, and for me to earn my living as editor of the *Volkische Beobachter*

The modest house-painter thought he had 'arrived' because he could at last boast of exercising an educated profession. Fortunately for him, the impetuous current of events pushed him farther and carried him higher than he expected, and he adapted himself uncomplainingly to the vaster and vaster perspectives that opened out before his movement, sacrificing the secret ambitions that survived from his unhappy childhood; the desire to marry a girl of good family, practise a respectable profession, own a comfortable country house, have a happy private life. He reached his goal because he made these sacrifices in time and concentrated all his ambitions on the will to power. The swift and radical changes he saw taking place in the relations between the political forces in Germany taught him not to be deceived by minor successes, such as election victories or the increased circulation of his own paper, because National-Socialism was a political enter-

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prise of a special kind, and no partial result could be considered stable and lasting until all the power was in its hands. To have stopped half-way would have meant plunging headlong to ruin. Mussolini took graver risks before realizing that Fascism was a totalitarian movement. The events between May and September 1921 are very instructive in this respect. During those months he wished to set Fascism on a new course. He proposed dropping terrorism and making a peace pact with the Socialists. It seems probable now that if he had succeeded it would have been the 'ruin' of Fascism. As it was, however, he failed, because the majority of the *fasci* rebelled and declared themselves ready to continue the struggle without him, or, if necessary, against him. The episode deserves to be recorded in some detail, Mr. W., because it is rich with instruction for every aspiring dictator. During the second half of 1920 and the first months of 1921, contrary to all the expectations of Mussolini, who had written that it would remain an urban movement, Fascism spread in the country districts of the Po Valley and in Tuscany, practising violence and terrorism against the Socialists, particularly the moderate Socialists. Independently of the political plans of the Duce, the initial programme of the *fasci* and their ideological premises, Fascism 'found its own path' by itself, as a tool in the hands of the landlords and industrialists to crush and exterminate the Socialists. The result was that a number of civil wars broke out, local or at most regional in character, not only in their practical results but also in their inspiration and direction. *Fasci* were established and multiplied, and acted without waiting for Mussolini's orders. The masters who financed and armed the Fascists, in order to rid themselves of the trade unions and the Socialist co-operatives, continued, on the purely political plane, to support either the Liberals or the Conservatives. In the spring of 1921 Mussolini became aware that in its rapid growth Fascism had escaped him, that it had not

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become the political instrument that he had desired, and that even the acts of violence he had always publicly approved and encouraged were being used to other ends than those he had anticipated. In this 'decadence' which had overcome a movement he had so recently founded as a 'patriotic' one, in this startling development outside his own control, in this 'degeneration' of the *fasci* into a capitalist militia, he thought he saw the first signs of the disintegration of Fascism and the guarantee of its approaching doom.

What happened to the Socialist Party in November 1919 is now happening to us, and it was fatal — he wrote towards the end of May. — Under Fascism there is hidden 'the illustrious cowardice' of persons who are frightened of others and frightened of us. Egoisms that are rapacious and refractory to all spirit of national conciliation have insinuated themselves into Fascism, and there are not lacking those who have used the prestige of Fascist violence for their miserable personal ends, and transform violence as a means into violence as an end in itself.

By national conciliation Mussolini meant a peace pact between the *fasci* and the Socialist organizations that should put an end to the civil war, and the setting up of a coalition government in which, in his own words, 'the three efficient forces in the country', the Socialists, the Catholics and the Fascists, should participate. The Duce was in a hurry to consolidate the political results of Fascist action, because he felt that public opinion was turning away from his movement, and believed that if he did not immediately arrange a compromise with the other political forces it would be too late. During July negotiations between representatives of the Socialists and the Fascists were opened, and a pact was signed on August 2nd in which both parties undertook to refrain from violence in the political and economic struggle. But the majority of the *fasci* revolted and declared that they would not recognize the pact. There

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followed a period of violent controversy which made it clear to the Duce that his authority over his followers was reduced to very small proportions. Let me read you a passage from an article of his. It will give you an idea of how little Mussolini understood Fascism at that time.

For me Fascism is not an end in itself — he wrote. — It was a means to restore national equilibrium, to revive certain neglected values. These ends have to a great extent been attained. Fascism can now split, dissolve, crumble, decline, disappear. If it is necessary to strike powerful blows to accelerate its ruin, I shall adapt myself to that unwelcome task. Fascism that is no longer liberation but tyranny, that is not the safeguarding of the Nation but the defence of private interests and of the most limited, sordid and wretched classes that exist in Italy, will still be Fascism, but not Fascism as I conceived it during one of our country's saddest moments . . . Was there then no awareness of the circle of hatred that threatened to exterminate good and bad Fascism alike? Was there no awareness that Fascism — even among the non-Socialist classes — had become synonymous with terror? I have broken that circle; I have opened a breach through the barbed wire of the hatred, the exasperation on the part of huge popular masses, which would have struck us down. I have restored to Fascism all its potentialities, I have shown it the way to greatness of all sorts by means of the civil truce that the higher forces of the Nation and Humanity required. And behold, just as in the disputes of the old parties, the heavy artillery of controversy, and defamation is aimed at my head, and there is talk of renunciation, capitulation, betrayal and other regrettable buffoonery . . . Can Fascism do without me? Certainly it can, but I too can do very well without it.

He was mistaken. The opposition to Mussolini, led by Dino Grandi, won the most important Fascist federations, whose representatives met at a national conference at which Musso-

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lini's 'betrayal' was harshly condemned. 'There are two solutions, one parliamentary and the other national: Mussolini is for parliamentary compromise, we are for the national solution', the conference declared. Subsequent events proved that Fascism could do without Mussolini and continue on its way, but without Fascism Mussolini would sink once more to the level of a journalist among many others. Before two months had passed the Duce had capitulated and accepted the policy of the opposition.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Every great man experiences solitude, ingratitude and uncertainty before his triumph. The Bible relates that Jacob wrestled all night with an angel before he was named Israel. The ordeal left him lame for life.

MR. W. I should not be very worried about the future if all my enemies were angels and I were what I am.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Everyone has the enemies he deserves, Mr. W. On the decisive day Jacob, because he was Jacob, had to face an angel, but Hitler, being Hitler, only had to face Monsignor Kaas. The story of Jacob contains an even more instructive episode. One day, when he was cooking a pottage of lentiles, the Bible tells us, he saw his brother Esau, the first-born, coming from the field, and he was faint. And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint. And Jacob, who was quick-witted, said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear unto me this day: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles, and he ate and drank and despised his birthright for a mess of pottage. Esau's stupidity may seem excessive to modern generations, but in its various forms the temptation of the mess of pottage is eternal. In the story of Fascism versus democracy the only difference is that the roles of Jacob and Esau are reversed. In 1922, in the face of an

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uncertain future, Hitler was tempted to renounce a stormy career for the pottage of lentiles of the *Völkische Beobachter*, and in 1921 Mussolini believed it would be a good bargain to liquidate Fascism in return for a few ministerial portfolios. But there was no Jacob among their opponents who was willing to appease the appetite of the two Fascist leaders with a mess of pottage. What would the consequences have been? It is true that the loss of a leader is not always a fatal blow to a movement, but it nearly always serves to weaken and divide it. Their opponents' unresourcefulness gave Mussolini and Hitler time to mature, to become real Fascist leaders and to realize the 'totalitarian' possibilities of their movements. The old governing class tried playing the card of the mess of pottage too late, when the Fascists felt themselves on the threshold of power, and the leaders' appetite could no longer be assuaged with a mere vegetable soup. Just as a dying man shows signs of improvement just before the end, asks for food and drink, recognizes those at his bedside and shows all the illusory symptoms that old peasant women call 'the death rally', so does a regime whose days are numbered fire off all the shots left in its locker, multiply manœuvres, offers, intrigues and threats, and develop a deceptive euphoria just before the end. 'Well-informed' journalists make reassuring statements.

Faced with the energy of the Government, the danger of a *coup d'état* has been definitely eliminated.

The Rome Government's threat to use the army against the Blackshirts has caused Mussolini to abandon the March to Rome.

The Schleicher Ministry, supported by Hindenburg, the Reichswehr and the Socialist trade unions, provides a solid and insuperable barrier to the victory of National-Socialism.

Schuschnigg's plebiscite will consolidate the independence of Austria in an enduring fashion, etc. etc.



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But a man with as much experience of politics as every old peasant woman has of birth and death can see at once that all this display of feverish activity is only the fictitious improvement that just precedes the end.

PROFESSOR PICKUP May I suggest 'swan-song' to you as an apt poetical image to describe the phenomenon?

THOMAS THE CYNIC In Italy we had that too. On the eve of the March to Rome, Italian democracy, believing it still possible to hold up the march of events, had recourse to the poet D'Annunzio, who was, of course, much more like a swan than a man. Since it gave him an opportunity of making a big speech, D'Annunzio naturally accepted the invitation. It was agreed that he should place himself at the head of a movement of ex-servicemen 'aiming at national conciliation', and the poet was to be personally responsible for the stage-management. At the same time every possible ministerial combination was tried in the lobbies of the Chamber, in the hope of intimidating, taming or seducing Mussolini. Plenty of Fascists even urged that a compromise be accepted, fearing that later it might be too late. The same situation occurred in Germany in 1932, when the wing of National-Socialism led by Gregor Strasser maintained that the movement was on the decline and that the Nazis should enter a coalition ministry as a minority. Hitler refused, as a few months earlier he had for the last time refused Roehm's and the Brownshirts' leaders' suggestions for a *putsch*.

MR. W. It is easy to say who was right and who was wrong after the event. But things might have turned out quite differently.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Quite true, but the most unlikely solution was a half-solution. History has many examples of men who at decisive moments turned out to be inferior to the tasks before them. I advise you to read some good biography of General Boulanger, Mr. W., because it will show you what it may cost to hesitate when bold action is required. General Boulanger,

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as is well known, had widespread support among many different sections of the population, radical, monarchical and working class, and seemed destined inevitably to come into power on a wave of popular enthusiasm. But in the spring of 1889, when he was accused of high treason by the Constant ministry, he ruined himself irretrievably by taking fright and fleeing to Belgium. The end came two years later, in a romantic manner, when he committed suicide on the grave of his mistress, Mme de Bonnemain. 'Every one knows that you have military courage,' the poet Déroulède, who was one of his supporters, once said to him, 'but you lack civil courage.' Our own times are certainly less romantic, and the participation of the masses in party struggles makes the penalties for a lack of civil courage on the part of the leaders far more severe. After years of civil war, when you have hundreds of corpses behind you and hundreds of thousands of armed followers around you, the only possible alternatives are victory or defeat. To facilitate the transition stage, a Fascist victory may be masked behind apparent concessions to constitutional rules, and the Fascist leader may come into power in the company of representatives of other organizations. But these concessions will be of brief duration. Since the leader does not come into power alone, but by setting in motion the forces that sustain him, the entry of the Fascist masses into the framework of the old state is sufficient immediately to create an entirely new situation. The old politicians who had helped the Fascist leader in the hope that, once in power, Fascism would be tamed and constitutionalized, look on with horror at the opposite phenomenon, the Fascist invasion of the state.

MR. W. Let us discuss that to-morrow morning.



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THE VICTORY OF THE SUBSTITUTE



## DIALOGUE XIII

### ON FASCISM AS THE SUBSTITUTE FOR SOCIALISM

MR. W. A German to whom I spoke some time ago said to me: 'For us a visit to Switzerland is like a sentimental journey into the age before the war. It is really moving for a German of forty to see pure, unadulterated bread, milk, cloth and olive oil within everybody's reach, to say nothing of all the other things which disappeared from ordinary life in Germany in 1914, to which one sometimes looks back now as to one's first love or one's childhood friends. The use of substitutes is constantly spreading to new branches of industrial production, and I could not tell you whether this suit, which was sold me in Berlin as wool, is really made of wood or of glass or of horses' hoofs. The only certain thing about it is that it isn't wool.'

THOMAS THE CYNIC The phenomenon is not confined to economic life, Mr. W. Fascism also involves substitution in intellectual and social life. There is a close connection between margarine and Fascism. Perhaps the best description of Fascism would be to call it mental margarine. In a period of extreme spiritual impoverishment such as ours, Fascism takes the place of thought, religion, art and morals. It offers a substitute for man's most elementary needs — truth, brotherhood, liberty, generosity, heroism. Moreover, it is also political margarine, replacing Socialism and democracy with a false Socialism and an apparent democracy.

PROFESSOR PICKUP I do not agree. In my opinion Fascism is not a substitute for anything, but a return to our origins, an attempt to wipe out the two thousand years of decadence which began with the spread of Christianity and ended in bourgeois democracy — two thousand years of slave mentality, mediocrity

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and mercantilism. Fascism is an attempt to restore an heroic content to human life, or at least to that of a social *élite*. In this it reveals itself as the heir and executor of the Romantic criticism of the bourgeois world.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Fascism is not a return to our origins, but rather I think, a substitute for a return to our origins, an apparent and deceptive return. But of that we shall speak another time. As for the Romantic criticism of the bourgeois order, I should like to point out that it preceded Fascism by many years, and that therefore an explanation is required of why it should only bear fruit now, and only in some countries, while in others, where the same criticism was no less violent, it has not borne fruit. The explanation can only be found if literature is left aside and the society from which Fascism was born is patiently analysed. In other words, for terrestrial facts you must seek terrestrial explanations.

MR. W. One shouldn't turn up one's nose at substitutes, if substitutes are really necessary. When something indispensable is lacking, some sort of substitute must somehow be found. Sometimes a substitute turns out to be an improvement on the real thing. This was proved to us by a Spanish writer, Ramon Gomez de la Serna, whom we visited in Paris. He wanted a wife, but was appalled by the prospect of the inconveniences of married life, which are particularly insupportable for the artist; so he solved his problem by acquiring an elegantly dressed Robot of natural size. With very little assistance indeed, it can walk, sit down, and bow. But the essential is that it can blush and say yes. This original marriage has now lasted several years, and Señor de la Serna seemed to me to be the happiest of men. You could go a long way before finding a wife as good as that. She never speaks, even when art or politics is discussed, never spends hours on the telephone, never gets headaches, and doesn't want to follow her husband about wherever he goes. But I forgot to mention the most important thing. She is the

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only lady I know whose permanent wave dates from her wedding-day and has remained permanent ever since. My point is that it's no good saying Fascism is a substitute for Socialism. Even if it is, one ought to make quite sure that the substitute isn't an improvement on the original.

PROFESSOR PICKUP As you yourself, Mr. Cynic, have several times reminded us, Fascism fought Socialism and criticized it very severely, even in its most moderate forms. I do not understand how you can now say that it is a substitute for Socialism.

THOMAS THE CYNIC It is a point well worth explaining, because it is an important one in distinguishing Fascism from previous forms of reaction. The essential thing to bear in mind is that the political defeat of the Socialist parties does not eliminate the concrete problems of production and social organization that they were intended to solve, nor does it destroy the class which constitutes the majority of the population in modern countries, the working class, whose interests, at any rate during the last fifty years, the Socialist parties have protected and represented. We have already seen the reasons why the governing democratic class in Italy and Germany was unable to take advantage of the Socialist defeat to consolidate its own position. It was not by chance that this defeat did not help the conservative political groupings of the traditional type, the heirs of Crispi and Bismarck, or the aristocratic and clerical coteries, of which there was no lack either in Italy or in Germany. A new, demagogic, plebeian movement was required, a movement lacking apparent ties with the old classes and capable of providing a new kind of co-operative and trade union organization for the working masses 'liberated' from Socialist influence; a movement which would take their needs and aspirations into account and provide them with a partial and apparent satisfaction, compatible with capitalist interests. The difference between Fascism, wherever it arises, and previous reactionary movements is that it fights revolution with revolutionary



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methods, appropriating its symbolism, its technique, its tactics, everything in it that is apparent.

PROFESSOR PICKUP You remind me of Hitler's declaration before the court at Munich: 'If I stand here to-day as a revolutionary, it is as a revolutionary against the revolution.'

MR. W. It is easy to see that if the Fascists had adopted morning coats or top-hats as their uniform instead of brown shirts or black shirts they would have had less success among the workers.

THOMAS THE CYNIC It is not the first time that a political movement has come to be named after some peculiarity of clothing. The French peasant revolts of the middle of the twelfth century in the Beauvais region were called *jacqueries* because of the *jacques*, or sleeveless coats, that distinguished the peasants from the nobles and the priests. A few centuries later the followers of the Jacobins were called *sans-culottes*, because instead of wearing the *culottes*, or knee-breeches, worn by the nobles, they wore long trousers, such as everyone wears to-day. In Sweden, about the middle of the eighteenth century, under Gustavus III, there was great antagonism between the party of the Caps and the party of the Hats. The 'Caps' were pro-Russian and the 'Hats' pro-French. In these cases, and in others which for the sake of brevity I shall not mention, the article of clothing that gave the movement or the party its name was really worn by the persons who took part in them in their private lives. But the case of the Fascist black shirts was very different. Before the days of Fascism, black shirts were worn at work in Italy by some classes of workers, not for aesthetic reasons but for the sake of economy, as black shows dirt less than other colours. But neither Mussolini nor any of his supporters who took part in the foundation of the first *fasci* had ever worn a black shirt to work in, and even later, when the *fasci* increased and multiplied, real workers were always in a minority in them. The result of the adoption of the black shirt was to disguise the social origin of the Fascists, and give the movement an out-

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wardly plebeian and rebellious character, even when the shirt was worn in armed anti-Socialist raids by students, officers and the sons of merchants and peasants.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Don't generalize from Italian experience, Mr. Cynic. There are other Fascist movements which from the first, have declared themselves inflexibly aristocratic, like the Rumanian movement founded by Corneliu Codreanu in 1924 and named after the Archangel Michael, to express its idealistic and mystical aspirations.

MR. W. Just a moment. Did Codreanu ever attain power?

PROFESSOR PICKUP No, poor chap, on the contrary, he . . .

MR. W. If that is the case, let us ignore him, since we are not dealing with poetry but with politics.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Before Fascism working-class organization and Socialist organization were practically identical, and were often confused, both in theory and practice, though in some countries the Catholics succeeded in creating a trade union movement of their own. Since working-class organization is nowadays an indispensable element in the stability of the labour market, Socialism, in the interests of capitalism itself, seemed invincible and irreplaceable. But Fascism has delivered a hard blow to Socialism by showing that it is possible to use working-class organization for anti-Socialist purposes. The harm done to the Socialist movement by the death of innumerable militant Marxists and the wholesale destruction of proletarian institutions was grave enough, but the demonstration of the practicability of adapting working-class organization to reactionary purposes was graver still. Moreover, it is a lesson that will not be wasted. One has no need to be a prophet to foresee that every future counter-revolutionary and anti-Socialist movement in the countries which are still democratic will assume a popular, even a plebeian mask, and will try to make headway among the workers, alternating the method of violence with the method of demagoguery, creating its own trade

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unions and gaining control of those already in existence. In addition to the qualities of which we have already spoken, the leader best adapted to this enterprise will have the advantages of being of humble origin and knowing the working class well. If he has worked in the Socialist, or, better still, the Communist Party, he will have even greater advantages. In France (which has a great tradition in the matter) ex-poachers turned game-keeper are said to be very well paid.

MR. W. At St. Denis, near Paris, we visited the ex-Communist Jacques Doriot, and that was exactly of what he reminded us — an ex-poacher turned game-keeper. May I say that in matters of demagoguery Americans have very little to learn from Europeans. We have a great and glorious tradition of demagoguery. Have you ever heard of Van Buren? Before the presidential election of 1828 he conducted a wild campaign for Jackson under the slogan of the 'defence of the sacred rights of the people'. No one was threatening those rights, least of all John Quincy Adams, the retiring president, but Van Buren's brilliant idea resulted in Jackson's being elected by an overwhelming majority. Van Buren subsequently succeeded Jackson, and was finally hoist with his own petard. When he offered himself for re-election he was opposed by Harrison, who was put up as the man of the people, 'the log-cabin man', modest, sober and of patriarchal habits, as against Van Buren himself, who, being president, lived in a palace, had many servants and ate with golden knives and forks.

THOMAS THE CYNIC As a European, Mr. W., I feel compelled respectfully to lower my arms. I have no courage to continue.

MR. W. On the contrary, I wish you to continue. Van Buren's art would barely suffice to-day to launch a new kind of braces or a new insect powder, much less get a candidate into the White House. It is of very little use nowadays to appeal to 'the sacred rights of the people', first of all because everybody does it, and secondly because the people no longer exists, being split

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up into so many distinct and conflicting interests and strongly organized groups. Though an independent political movement of the working class has never existed in America, the problem of economic Socialism and the role of the State in production and consumption is, as is well known, an extremely topical one. I am greatly attracted by your theory that Socialism can only be fought with the methods of Socialism, Mr. Cynic, and I have an idea it is valid in America too. I should like you to explain it more fully, and tell me how it has been applied in Europe by the Fascists. I think it ought to be easier to gain acceptance for a substitute in a country where the genuine article is scarcely known but where a demand for it is beginning to appear.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Europe, Mr. W., has known substitutes for Socialism from its first appearance on the political scene. As soon as the European Socialists substituted the concrete idea of classes for the vague and abstract idea of 'the people' and denounced political democracy as a fraud, the old demagoguery *à la* Van Buren was put out of business as far as the workers were concerned. They could no longer be taken in by it. Henceforward it was necessary for our demagogues to present themselves in the guise of inventors of marvellous plans for the solution of the social problem. Let me give you just one example, that of Napoleon III. Louis Bonaparte spent a part of his youth in Italy with his elder brother, and both entered the society of the Carbonari and plotted against the Pope and the other princes of Italy, perhaps hoping that a revolution might give them an Italian throne. The elder brother was killed in the Romagna insurrection of 1831. Louis Bonaparte continued to plot, even after leaving Italy, and he took a particular interest in the new Socialist ideas which were then prevalent in France. In 1844, when he was imprisoned in the fortress of Ham, in Picardy, he wrote a pamphlet, *L'extinction du paupérisme*, which was full of reminiscences of his Socialist readings.

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PROFESSOR PICKUP 'The extinction of pauperism?' Doesn't it sound like a plagiarism of Upton Sinclair?

THOMAS THE CYNIC Let me read you a few short passages. In the introduction he explained that 'the sole aim' of his plan was 'the well-being of the working class' and that he wished 'to propose a means capable of initiating the masses into all the benefits of civilization'. The essence of his plan was this.

Let the Chambers decree that all these uncultivated lands (in France) should belong by right to the working-class association, subject to an annual payment to the present proprietors equivalent to what they draw from them to-day.

The cultivation of the land in question

would be rendered possible by the creation of agricultural colonies, which, spread throughout France, would form the basis of a single, vast organization of which all the poor workers would be members without being personally proprietors.

Uppermost in his mind was the political strength which his agricultural colonies would give the government that initiated them. For, he said:

Give rights to the most anarchical proletarian, give him a legal place in society, and you at once make of him a man of order, devoted to society, for you give him interests to defend. Unorganized masses are nothing — he observed in the same pamphlet, — disciplined they are everything . . . To-day the reign of castes is finished, one can only govern with the masses; they must therefore be organized so that they may formulate their will, and they must be disciplined so that they may be directed and enlightened about their real interests. Governing is no longer dominating people by force and violence; it is leading them towards a better future, appealing to their reason and their heart.

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MR. W. Their reason and their heart? If the pamphlet was intended for the masses, well said. Otherwise such a phrase would seem a little odd to me, and unworthy of a real politician. In all sincerity, I am interested in nothing but power. Capitalism and Socialism are secondary things to me. Before coming to Europe I had a conversation with Monsignor McNicolas, the Archbishop of Cincinnati. 'Catholicism is agnostic in regard to the economic order,' the worthy prelate told me. 'It was born in antiquity, in a slave society, it prospered in the Middle Ages under feudalism, it adapted itself to capitalism, and it may very well adapt itself to Socialism.' What holy words! From that moment I felt the Catholic faith palpitating in my breast! The only thing that matters to me is power. It is all the same to me whether I rule slaves or serfs or working-men or bourgeois or bankers. But I must rule. I accept the economic regime as I find it. If I were a Soviet citizen I should strive for power paying homage to collective property and adorning my speeches with tags from Lenin. Being an American citizen, I am equally consistent in trying to find the appropriate technique for the attainment of my aim. This may seem stupid and crude to you, but I prefer to be sincere and to tell you what I feel.

PROFESSOR PICKUP I know only too well what you feel. All my efforts to make you feel the fascination that political action acquires when it is illuminated by a high ideal, and is applied to giving a country a government dictated by the heart and mind of a true leader, have been in vain.

MR. W. You bore me, old man. How many more times must I tell you that I neither am nor wish to be a reformer or philanthropist or benefactor of the human race? I am a politician, no more and no less. I am sorry for the poor, but I am not responsible for their poverty, and why should I help them to escape from it? The politician has his own problem to solve, which is to get into power, and the poor have theirs, which is to get enough to eat.



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PROFESSOR PICKUP If you proclaim those ideas in public you will never get into power.

MR. W. They are not ideas but feelings, and I have not proclaimed them in public but only among friends. I need scarcely add that though I have no desire to be a reformer I have no desire to oppose reform either. If the world wishes for reform, let it have reform. It doesn't cost me a cent. I shall naturally tell the electorate whatever is necessary to win them. That is why I am interested in the political technique of Fascism, of which I should like the exclusive American rights. In my opinion there is something miraculous about the technique of Fascism. It unites the whole country for a lasting period at the feet of one man; it satisfies the capitalists, whose property it protects, it pleases the workers, to whom it offers a substitute for Socialism, it pleases the petty bourgeoisie and the professional classes, whose vanity it tickles, to say nothing of the soldiers, whose glory it assures. What finer ideal could a politician have than to have the whole country united at his feet?

PROFESSOR PICKUP What are we men in your eyes? Don't you feel any love for your neighbour?

MR. W. I feel what has already been described as the love of the horseman for the horse.

THOMAS THE CYNIC I congratulate you on your frankness, Mr. W. Your attitude is common to the majority of politicians, most of whom consider other men merely as tools. But only a few are brave enough to confess it. That clears the air for our discussion of the first characteristic of the Fascist attitude towards working-class organization. In Fascist eyes working-class organization is the basis of all contemporary political action. But, since they find it in the hands of their opponents, they have first of all to destroy and then reconstruct it, or at all events conquer and assimilate it. I should like to offer our professor here a little anthology of Fascist thoughts on the subject for his 'Breviary'. 'The masses are weak, lazy, cowardly,' Goebbels

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wrote in *Signale der neuen Zeit*. In his *Kampf um Berlin* the same author wrote:

For us the masses are unformed raw material. Only at the hands of a political wizard can the masses be turned into a people and a people into a nation. If one takes from the people their leader or even their betrayer,<sup>1</sup> they are rudderless and can easily be vanquished.

In *Revolution der Deutschen* Goebbels says again: 'We live in an age when a policy, to be successful, must be supported by the masses.' In Hitler's *Mein Kampf* the idea of the utilization of working-class organization for nationalist ends is made clearer and more concrete.

At the age of twenty I had learned to distinguish between the trade union as a means for protecting the employees' general social rights and the trade union as the instrument of the party of the political class-struggle — he writes. — But the same trade unions, led fanatically in the political and national interest, would turn millions of workers into the most valuable members of their nation, regardless of occasional individual struggles for purely economic demands.

Even the choice of the party name must be influenced by the necessity of approaching the masses.

The name of the new movement — Hitler wrote — must from the first offer the possibility of approaching the great masses.

For several years the sub-title of Mussolini's paper, the *Popolo d'Italia*, remained 'Socialist daily', but later it was altered to 'producers' daily'. In September 1921, when there was heated controversy concerning the transformation of the Fascist movement into a party, Mussolini insisted on calling it the *partito fascista del lavoro*, 'The Fascist Party of Labour'. 'The word

<sup>1</sup> ihren Führer oder auch ihren Verführer.



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"Labour" — he declared — is indispensable in the new party's name.' The word only, of course. In 1919 he had had the idea of separating the trade unions from the Socialist Party and creating an Italian Labour Party, on the English model, in conjunction with the reformists. But nothing came of this, if only for the reason that the militant workers, remembering his 'betrayal' in 1914, refused to have anything to do with him and regarded him as an 'untouchable'. He was therefore forced to go his own way. Though he had spent a long time preaching trade union unity, he ended by establishing Fascist trade unions. At the first congress of the Fascist unions, Mussolini, to justify himself, declared:

Gentlemen, if one wishes to live, it is necessary to sabotage and destroy the enemy in all his haunts, in all his trenches.

A few weeks before he had stated:

Fascism practises trade unionism through a physiological necessity of its development.

PROFESSOR PICKUP The Fascists, withdrawing the trade union organizations from the destructive influence of Marxism, aimed at transforming them into a factor of order and discipline, and into a school for the moral re-education of the workers.

THOMAS THE CYNIC We shall discuss the function of trade unions in a Fascist state on another occasion. But as long as Fascism was struggling for the conquest of the state, trade unions were employed in a manner very different from that which you have just suggested, professor. One single principle seems to have guided Mussolini and Hitler whenever they had an opportunity of taking part in the workers' struggles. That was to promote disorder, aggravate disorder and maintain disorder, because only disorder can justify the establishment of a dictatorship. Prolonged disorder paralyses the economic and social life of the country, hampers its relations with foreign countries, aggravates poverty, casts irreparable discredit on democratic

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institutions, renders the livelihood of every single individual uncertain, and finally makes dictatorship seem the only way out. Permanent disorder results in an atmosphere in which the man in the street loses patience, abandons all restraint and repeats to everyone he meets, strangers and acquaintances alike, that he doesn't care what happens as long as strong government returns to put an end to the general anarchy and chaos. Disorder is to Fascism what soil is to the plant. When the natural soil is impoverished and tends to disappear, what does a good gardener do? To prevent the plant from withering he adds artificial manure. Mr. Cynic, you must see to it that the intervention of American Fascism does not result in alleviating the crisis and improving the situation. That would be fatal. It would mean bolstering up the democracy you are aiming to destroy. Of course you will talk of peace and order on all occasions, but don't forget to repeat *ad nauseam* that only by the complete victory of Fascism can real order and lasting peace be obtained. And if, before you achieve power, the situation for some unforeseen reason unfortunately shows signs of improvement and a spirit of optimism begins to prevail, don't lose a single moment, Mr. W., but do everything in your power to rekindle disorder, because without it Fascism is inconceivable. Don't imagine that your task will be difficult, because you have the instructive examples of Hitler and Mussolini before you. Let me read you a passage from Goebbels's diary on the Berlin transport strike in November 1932.

The workers of the Berlin transport union have struck — he wrote. — We have also given out strike instructions to our party. The whole Press is cursing us madly, they call it Bolshevism! . . . The striking workers have resorted to active terror against the strike-breakers. Tram-lines have been torn up, and the few trams running have been bombarded with stones. There are already a number of hurt and wounded . . . Our people have naturally seized the

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leadership of the strike in every quarter of the city . . . Every hour new bloodthirsty acts of terror occur. Four dead are already reported. A revolutionary mood prevails in Berlin. Our party apparatus is functioning perfectly. The bourgeois Press has invented the lie that I have seized the opportunity of this strike, without the knowledge or desire of the Führer, to carry the party over into the Bolshevik channel, although I am in hourly telephonic communication with him. He approves of my policy in every particular. Had we not acted so we should no longer have been a workers' party.

Three years earlier Goebbels himself had described the function of the true revolutionary, meaning of course the Nazi, in the following terms. It is, he stated,

. . . to unleash volcanic passions, to rouse outbursts of anger, to set masses of men in motion, to organize hatred and despair with ice-cold deliberation, so to speak with legal means. It is this which distinguishes the true revolutionary from the revolutionary gasbag.

To the democrats, who denounced National-Socialism for being purely negative and destructive, Goebbels replied:

Criticism is the privilege of the opposition. It is sovereign and absolute and not in the least bound to do better . . . The Government has no right to forbid the opposition to practise criticism. Anyone may criticize who feels himself a victim of the evils of the system criticized . . . An opposition exists only to demand. How its demands are to be met is a matter for the government to think out.

Hitler's theory of the strike as stated in *Mein Kampf* sets out from the same principle.

For the National-Socialist trade union, the strike is a means that will and must only be applied so long as the National-Socialist national state does not yet exist.

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**PROFESSOR PICKUP** I wish to point out a flagrant contradiction. Previously you said that Fascism developed in Germany and Italy with the support of the landlords and industrialists. Now you are trying to convince us that the Fascists, in order to increase disorder and win over the masses, actually competed with the Marxists in encouraging and organizing strikes. But don't you see that the two things are incompatible, and hence that one or other of them cannot be true?

**THOMAS THE CYNIC** The example of Italian Fascism will serve to explain the connection between the two apparent incompatibles, professor. First of all you must bear in mind that the capitalists do not constitute a homogeneous class. For a long time Fascist demagoguery directed its attacks against two particular kinds of capitalist — the shopkeepers and the landlords — without displeasing the others. At the end of June and the beginning of July 1919, popular risings took place in many cities in Italy in which shops were raided and the goods confiscated or freely distributed, while a compulsory reduction of fifty per cent was imposed on retail prices. In some cities this movement was initiated by the Fascists, helped by groups of ex-service men. Mussolini gave it his public approval. 'I demand the firing-squad for the starver-merchants,' he wrote in his paper on June 16th, a few days before the risings. As soon as the raids on the shops began he gave them his blessing.

Revolt is an absolute necessity to strike down these blood-suckers — he wrote. — At Bergamo the exploiters were hunted down, and we cannot but approve of this. In the Romagna the people revolts energetically against the corruption of the profiteers. It is not the Socialist Party that unleashed and directed these demonstrations . . . we approve the fundamental justice of these popular protests.

**MR. W.** But the shop-keepers weren't Jews. . . .

**THOMAS THE CYNIC** Let me go on. Another capitalist enterprise against which the Fascists incessantly incited the public

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was the state itself, which in Italy, in addition to exercising a number of monopolies, such as salt and tobacco, controls the railways and the post, telegraph and telephone services. Fascist agitation among the employees in the public services was not in the least displeasing to the private capitalists, who have never looked kindly at the assumption of economic functions by the state. After the conquest of power Fascism suppressed not only the right to strike but also the right of trade union organization in the public services. But as long as it was in opposition, from the first economic agitation started by the railwaymen and post office workers at the end of 1919, Fascism gave the agitators its support and approval. Mussolini's paper stated on that occasion:

We must follow with sympathy the struggle of the two great categories of employees of the public services against the state . . . These days of violent proletarian action have the value of a revival.

As long as Mussolini believed in the possibility of a proletarian revolution, his attitude to the private industrialists was very cautious. His principal difference from the Socialists at that time was in his attitude to the Italian military victory. Otherwise he showed himself very eclectic. When the workers occupied the factories Mussolini made overtures to their leaders to express his solidarity with them, and a Sorelist-Fascist, Agostino Lanzillo, wrote in Mussolini's paper:

There is as much beauty as greatness in this revolutionary act. In the midst of lazy and cowardly post-war Italy, a powerful movement arises against the incapable, disintegrating and corrupt bourgeoisie. This is magnificent proof of the profound change that is at work in the national conscience.

A year later, when the situation was reversed, this same Lanzillo, in a book called *Le rivoluzioni del dopo-guerra*, wrote:

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The experiment (the occupation of the factories) was an act of madness, or, to put it better still, it was childish. For that reason alone it was condemned to failure. If it had lasted longer it would have resulted in the paralysis of production.

The Fascists thereupon proceeded to struggle with all their might to prevent the defeat of proletarian extremism and the coincident improvement in trade from contributing to a general pacification. For that would have been the end of Fascism. The working class was now forced back on the defensive, so the Fascists opened civil war against them. The nature of this bloodthirsty struggle is well-illustrated by a single sentence from the *Memorie d'un fascista*, written by a certain Umberto Bianchelli, of Florence.

For a certain time — he wrote — it sufficed for a Fascist band to meet persons of working-class appearance in the street for them to be attacked without mercy.

Towards the end of 1921, when the industrialists of Florence believed that, as the Communist peril no longer existed, there was no further need to finance the Fascist gangs for the purpose of intimidating and beating up the workers, the Fascists expressed their indignant astonishment in a public manifesto.

Faced with the open or hidden hostility of the population, and above all that of the rich and contented bourgeoisie, who applaud Fascist action as long as it coincides with their material rights, the Fascists formally announce that from to-day they withdraw from the struggle,

they declared. Everyone understood this as an explicit invitation to the Communists to resume and intensify their activity, so that the rich, now without Fascist protection, might tremble with fear and once more be forced to renew their subsidies. Similar manifestoes appeared on the initiative of the local *fasci* in other cities. The Fascists were indignant at the idea of being

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discarded as useless or because the country wished to live in peace. But, aided by their system of provocation, they had no difficulty in demonstrating to the sceptical that they were more indispensable than ever. An extreme, I might also say a classic example, will illustrate their technique, Mr. W. In 1924-5 the Italian Embassy in Paris, fearing the possibility of Communist outrages, sent for a band of Fascists from Italy to keep a watch on their premises. The young men employed for this purpose were well-paid and lived a happy, care-free life in the gay city, having no work to do and not being exposed to danger of any kind. After a few months, when the expected outrages did not take place, the Embassy, finding the bodyguard an expensive luxury, gave them notice and invited them to return to their own country. Punctually a few days later 'Communist' outrages took place at the Embassy and the headquarters of the Paris *fascio*. The French police were indiscreet enough, however, to discover that they had been committed by the *squadristi* themselves, who had wished to demonstrate how absolutely essential their presence in Paris was.

MR. W. Why didn't they have the outrages committed by real Communists?

THOMAS THE CYNIC I see with pleasure, Mr. W., that you have grasped the idea. But don't forget this. Before a ship can move, it's not enough to set the sails. You have to have a wind. The technique will not work unless circumstances are such as to offer the impresarios of disorder new opportunities every day. But when disorder already prevails, big results can be obtained with minimum effort. Between the spring of 1920 and the spring of 1922 Fascism had destroyed all the peasant leagues and Socialist co-operatives in the Po Valley, but there was no danger of its dying of inanition, because the agricultural workers who had been forced into the Fascist trade unions continued to agitate on account of the prevalent unemployment. The only difference was that while the Socialists had always directed

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discontent against the landlords, the Fascists directed it against the state. In April 1922, a memorable march on Bologna took place, led by the Fascist Italo Balbo, who wrote on that occasion:

The Fascists need to be exalted. The combative spirit must be maintained at high pressure. That is the responsibility of the leader. Woe if they are left to themselves!

Thus, in spite of the close ties between Fascism, the possessing classes and the state apparatus, Fascism devoted itself in wholesale fashion to nourishing disorder, stimulating the mutual hatred of the classes and universal hatred of democratic institutions.

MR. W. That is what we would call 'muck-raking'.

THOMAS THE CYNIC We call it 'fishing in troubled waters'. Fascism, in the period prior to its accession to power, is the best tool for fishing in troubled waters that could possibly be devised. Its rebellious appearance helps it to act as a substitute for Socialism, the place of which it takes in the heated minds of the revolutionary masses. It is false and inaccurate to think there is any necessity for Fascism to subject the masses to a kind of spiritual quarantine to cause them to change their outlook after their 'liberation' from Marxist influence. This has practically never been necessary. Generally, after eliminating the leaders and the most conscious Socialist elements by violence, the Fascists proceeded to an immediate reorganization of the masses into Fascist trade unions, replacing the cult of proletarian Socialism with the cult of National Socialism with the greatest of ease.

PROFESSOR PICKUP In New York I had a long discussion on this subject with the psychologist Erich Fromm. I remember his words:

Rebellion which only changes its object but maintains and actually intensifies authoritarianism, and the ideal of which is the type of rebel who has come into power, has



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great sociological significance. It often appears in the form of 'revolution'. The new authority exploits the hatred of the old and promotes the illusion that the struggle against the oppression of the old authority was a struggle against oppression in general. The longing for liberty and independence seems to have been fulfilled. But as the fundamental psychological structure remains unaltered, the revolt turns out to be nothing but a temporary outbreak of defiance and resistance, and the new authority takes the place which the old one was no longer able to preserve.

I am myself only partially convinced by this argument. It seems to me that the difference between the partisan concept of Socialism and the wider and nobler one of patriotism is so great that the substitution of the latter for the former must necessarily involve a profound psychological modification.

THOMAS THE CYNIC We are not now talking of intellectual concepts but of psychological realities, professor. In the mental life of mass-man the idea of his country is an extension of the child's idea of his mother and his family. One may say that many of those who as grown-ups are particularly devoted to their country were particularly devoted to their mothers in childhood. In the case of workers, their trade union or their party, and, in the case of most believers, the Church, is an extension of their infantile picture of the family. There may be intellectual differences between Socialism and patriotism, but this will not prevent their being emotionally equivalent. The exploitation of this emotional equivalence may serve to make millions of people pass from one party to another without any sensation of discomfort and without any psychological modification taking place. Let me give you an instance. In August 1922, the Italian Alliance of Labour, which was an alliance of trade unions and anti-Fascist parties, declared a national general strike. A group of Fascist postal and telegraphic workers met in Rome to decide what to do. The Fascist Party

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order was to sabotage the strike. But sabotaging a strike involves hatred and contempt, and being called abusive names by one's work-mates. It is a betrayal. The Fascists were therefore in a quandary, without even realizing the true cause of their uneasiness, until there arrived from Milan a message from Mussolini which said nothing new but contained new words. The decisive words were as follows: 'It is not the anti-Fascists on strike who are the true revolutionaries; it is we who are the true revolutionaries.' A sigh of relief at once went round the meeting. They all looked at one another, smiling and reassured. 'Ah! it is we who are the true revolutionaries; and if we don't march with our colleagues it is only because they are not true revolutionaries.' This story was subsequently told in print by one of those present. Another incident. A year earlier I spent the evening with two Socialist workers at a Milan theatre, where a topical and somewhat banal revue was being performed. In one scene the civil war, which was then causing bloodshed in the streets throughout the country, was represented as a family quarrel. The rival parties were represented by three boys, the Socialist clothed in red, the Catholic in white and the Fascist in green. Italy was represented by an old lady in mourning, the Mother, who did nothing but weep and lament and implore while her sons fought. 'Don't make me suffer so much!' she tearfully exclaimed. 'Why do you make me suffer so much? How terribly you make me suffer!' Eventually the poor woman succeeded in bringing the boys together in such a way that their costumes formed the Italian tricolour. Afterwards, when we went out into the street, I noticed that my two Socialist working-men friends still had tears in their eyes.

**PROFESSOR PICKUP** Let us return to the concrete question and leave feelings aside. Socialism is class-struggle while Fascism is class-collaboration. Nobody can convince me that these two things are equivalent for the working man.

**THOMAS THE CYNIC** The two things are in reality very different

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but nevertheless there is a point where they meet. For the Socialist trade unionist the class-struggle is a means for achieving Socialism, that is to say, an ideal, classless society in which the worker will be inferior to no other member of the community. For the non-Socialist trade unionist the class-struggle is simply a means for improving his material conditions. It is an expedient to diminish the distance between him and the petty bourgeoisie, and raise himself a step in the social scale; it may even enable him to conceal his proletarianism, of which he is often ashamed, and identify himself with the bourgeoisie. Fascism, with its class-collaboration, offers the Socialist worker a substitute for the classless society, and the non-Socialist worker a substitute identification with the bourgeoisie. To the Socialist workers it offers a substitute for the classless society in the sense that Fascism nominally suppresses classes (they are no longer spoken of; or, if they are, it is only to say that they no longer exist, having been reabsorbed into the nation; hence, why talk of them?) To the non-Socialist worker it offers a substitute for elevation in the social scale, in the sense that the backward worker, if he enters the Fascist party, can wear a black or a brown shirt, just like his 'comrade' the banker, and at a party celebration the latter may even slap him on the back and say: 'Do you think it's going to rain to-morrow, old chap?' In either case Fascism only provides a substitute. It neither abolishes class differences, nor does any amount of back-slapping result in an improvement in the worker's lot. Both illusions are rendered possible by a dimming of the idea of class in the worker's mind; not, of course, in the capitalist's mind, for 'the interests of national production' provide him with an excellent excuse for quietly continuing his own class-struggle.

PROFESSOR PICKUP This morning you violently denounced psychological arguments.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Since we are talking of substitutes it is impossible to avoid them.

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PROFESSOR PICKUP I have no need to repeat that for me Fascism is not a substitute for anything, but is absolutely original. Any return to the origins involves overcoming the artificial divisions and barriers of modern society. Fascism is consistent in its anti-capitalism and its anti-Socialism, because both are expressions of the same decadence. My 'Breviary of Fascist Thought' is full of quotations that amply prove my assertion. In order not to weary you, I shall only read you a few of them. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* contains the answer to what you have just been saying, Mr. Cynic. The movement, he wrote:

must sharply oppose the idea, prevalent above all in capitalist circles, that when the racial community<sup>1</sup> has been achieved the employed will be handed over helplessly to the employers, and that every attempt on the part of the employed to defend their legitimate interests is an attack on the racial community.

Feder, in his *Kampf gegen die Hochfinanz*, speaks of the 'crisis of the capitalist age'. In an article in the *Angriff* Goebbels once wrote that

we regard the present economic order as intolerable and immoral and we therefore hate it from the bottom of our hearts, combat it and will one day abolish it root and branch.

Reventlow, in his *Nationaler Sozialismus im neuen Deutschland* says that

the worker and his work must be freed from capitalist exploitation . . . It is private capitalism, with its bailiffs and its usurers, that have brought us to our present plight.

Klagges says in his *Reichtum und soziale Gerechtigkeit*, that 'Capitalism is fundamentally the economic mailed fist'.

<sup>1</sup> *Volkgemeinschaft*.

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Gregor Strasser declared in the Reichstag in 1932:

The essential feature of the present situation is the great anti-capitalist longing that permeates our people and has to-day consciously or unconsciously gripped ninety-five per cent of them.

MR. W. Have you many more quotations, professor? If you have, say so, and I shall go for a walk and come back when you have finished.

THOMAS THE CYNIC I sympathize with you, Mr. W., but you must be a little more patient. In talking of dictatorships quotations are inevitable. If you want to become a dictator you must get used to it. A dictatorship is a regime in which men do not think but quote. Under a Catholic dictatorship they quote the Pope, and the Scriptures as interpreted by the Pope. Under a Communist dictatorship they quote Stalin, and Lenin as interpreted by Stalin. Under a Fascist dictatorship they quote the national loudspeaker.

MR. W. Quotations get on my nerves. They remind me of school.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Dictatorship, Mr. W., comes from dictation, which is also a school exercise, with the added disadvantage that there is only one school, and that if you blot your copy-book you go to prison. Not only does every dictatorship decree what books are legitimate and sacred and what others are illegal and condemned; it also reserves to itself the sole right of interpreting the sacred texts, so as to be able to change their meaning according to the requirements of the moment. Think, for example, of the fate of the Bible at the hands of the Catholic Church, and of the writings of Marx and Lenin under the dictatorship of Stalin. Those who do not agree with the official interpretation are declared heretics and damned souls, or obscene vipers and agents of foreign powers. Such methods are essential to safeguard dictatorships from the inconveniences

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that would arise, say, in the case of Italy and Germany, if it were permissible to discuss, for instance, the various opinions about Socialism the Fascist leaders have themselves expressed. Your quotations, professor, are perfectly genuine, but there would be no difficulty in answering them with other quotations from the same authors saying precisely the opposite. Inside totalitarian countries these writings have an official character and their inconsistencies are not advertised, but there is nothing to prevent our discussing and explaining them. In 1919-20 German economy was in such a plight that no one, not even the capitalists themselves, dared to defend it. The sole subject of discussion was what should be done to establish a new economic regime. Among the demands of National-Socialism that Hitler announced to the public at the end of 1920 a number were definitely anti-capitalist in nature: 'the breaking of the tyranny of interest'; 'complete confiscation of all war profits'; 'the nationalization of all factories turned into limited companies (trusts)'; 'profit-sharing at the big factories'; 'immediate communalization of the big stores and their letting at low rentals to small men'; 'the strictest control of small men's deliveries to the state and other public authorities'; 'a law for the confiscation without compensation of land for public utility purposes'; 'the abolition of ground-rent'; 'the death penalty for usurers and profiteers'. These were popular claims, common to other parties, and in conformity with the expectations of the great majority of the German people. But, in spite of much talk and much planning, nothing was done, and the German capitalists owe an enormous debt of gratitude for this to the German Social-Democrats. Hitler introduced the first modification of his claims in August of the same year with the declaration that 'industrial capital will be left undisturbed as creating real wealth, while only Jewish international loan-capital will be fought'. On the question of the expropriation of land for purposes of public utility Rosenberg still insisted at the

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beginning of 1923 on the refusal of all indemnity to the expropriated owners, but proposed restricting the state right of expropriation to the needs of building roads and canals. The political development of the party and its relations with the capitalists led to the revision of the rest. In 1928 Hitler announced that only those lands should be expropriated which were not being administered in the public interest and the acquisition of which could be shown to have been illegal, and he explained that this was aimed 'primarily at Jewish land speculation companies'. Feder had remarked in his *Der Programm der NSDAP*

that the recognition of private property necessarily arose from the correct understanding of the meaning of labour.

In his *Kampf gegen die Hochfinanz* the same writer discovered a new kind of banker.

Do not believe that we shall eliminate the solid private banker, or would be able to dispense with his co-operation, he wrote. Klagges, in his *Reichtum und soziale Gerechtigkeit*, made the following statement with regard to industrial production:

National-Socialism decisively rejects the taking over of the *production of goods*. Personal ability and enterprise are least to be dispensed with in this domain . . . Only in exceptional cases can the question of the nationalization of production arise, namely when a product is of such importance for the safety of the state that for that reason it cannot be entrusted to a private individual, or if for any compelling reason it must be a monopoly.

In his controversy with Otto Strasser in 1930, Hitler wrote that 'the expression Socialism is bad in itself', that for him such a thing as the capitalist system did not exist, and that all the masses desired was to eat and enjoy themselves. 'Joint-ownership and joint control by the workers,' the Fuhrer wrote, 'is

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Marxism, while I only grant the right of that influence to a state led by a higher stratum.' For the purpose of attracting the workers influenced by Communism, Otto Strasser and Goebbels were still allowed to talk of Socialism, but Socialism as the real objective of National-Socialism, even in the limited forms announced in 1920, had long been laid aside. The first step towards the liquidation of the anti-capitalism of the early stages was powerfully assisted by the distinction that was made between 'destructive and constructive capital'. Healthy and productive capitalism was not to be condemned, but only some of its parasitic degenerations, which had emerged as poisonous growths from the war and the inflation. The second step was taken by confusing nationalism and Socialism and confounding the word 'Socialism' with the word 'social'. (Many outside Germany also do the latter.) 'We know that the highest Socialism and the highest nationalism are identical; they are the highest service of the people, the highest devotion to the people, the highest struggle for the people', Hitler declared in a speech at Königsberg in March 1933; and at the party congress in September he said: 'If the word Socialism is to have a meaning, it can only be this; that everyone should justly, and hence intuitively, devote himself to the general good in proportion to his native abilities. This principle is supremely just because it is logical and reasonable in itself.' In *Mein Kampf* Hitler had written 'that it is dangerous to involve a great political movement, intended to change men's whole outlook, with economic questions too early'. He did not fully succeed in avoiding this at first, but he was soon able to free himself from his concrete pledges and replace them with magical formulas. Dr. Ley, the trade union leader, stated in his *Durchbruch der sozialen Ehre* that

We must succeed in diverting the attention of productive man from material demands, from wage-rates, prices, dividends and all the old trade-union truck, to higher aims,



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to faith and trust . . . The Leader does not talk of wages and prices, but of soul, race, blood, soil and fatherland . . . Our predecessors believed they could make people happy merely by filling their stomachs . . . The more I am absorbed in my mission the less do I think of eating.

In Italy the crisis of capitalism was less severe than in Germany, and the proletariat was less strong, and Mussolini was therefore able to pass from anti-capitalism to pro-capitalism with greater assurance, to end up with the economic fraud of the Corporate State.

MR. W. There are nine-and-forty ways of composing tribal lays, and every single one of them is right.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Why should not the spiritual Socialism of Hitler be a new and original kind of Socialism? I wonder why you insist on calling it a substitute?

THOMAS THE CYNIC If we are to have a reasonable discussion, professor, we must agree about the meaning of words and use them as exactly as possible. If you employ the word 'chair' to mean not only 'chair' but also 'scissors' and 'cat' it will be very difficult for us to discuss chairs. The Communists have already caused confusion of this kind, first by calling Social-Democracy 'Fascism', and later by describing any kind of opposition to their own party as 'Fascism'. Using false names to describe oneself and one's opponents is like trying to hide behind a smoke-screen, and is a sign of weakness. When we discuss the Fascist economic regime we shall talk of this again. What we are talking about now is the pseudo-Socialism which Fascism, particularly German Fascism, exploited in its propaganda before its accession to power. Forgive me if, for the sake of the clarification of elementary ideas, I seem to speak in an elementary manner. Socialism means socialization. Nationalization, whether partial or total, is not Socialism. Why? Capitalism has separated labour from the ownership of the means of production. Under the feudal system the two were united.

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Socialism aims at reuniting labour and the means of production on the technical and social level that has been made possible by modern industry, taking the latter out of the hands of private individuals and the state and giving it to the labouring community. Fascist 'Socialism' is not of this nature, hence it is not Socialism, but a bogus form of Socialism, a substitute for it, a fake. All that the totalitarian state does when it intervenes in production remains, and is bound to remain, within the confines of capitalism. The success of the fake is aided by the fact that even many so-called Socialists have lost the notion of Socialism and confuse nationalization, and even any kind of state intervention in production, with Socialism.

MR. W. We must discuss these things again, but I hope in a less abstract manner.



## DIALOGUE XIV

### ON FASCISM AS THE SUBSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY

MR. W. A hundred years ago De Tocqueville wrote that if liberty were ever suppressed in America, it would be in consequence of the tyranny of the majorities, who would end by forcing the minorities to defend themselves by unconstitutional means. Numerous symptoms of that tyranny are already perceptible, and I see plainly that there is a close connection between the prospects of Fascism in America and the illegal reactions of malcontent minorities. However, it seems to me that it will be very difficult to get Americans to accept any restriction of majority rights, in other words to get them to renounce democracy.

PROFESSOR PICKUP But Fascism is not anti-democratic. Fascism is a popular movement. Fascism is a new and higher form of government, superseding all previous kinds, including democracy. Whoever enters a Fascist country with eyes to see and ears to hear cannot deny that the masses take part in public life to an extent entirely unknown in democratic regimes of the past.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Do you believe that widespread participation of the people suffices to give a movement a democratic character?

PROFESSOR PICKUP Certainly.

THOMAS THE CYNIC When the Vendéan peasants and the Chouans made war upon the Convention, was that a democratic movement?

PROFESSOR PICKUP No, it was a conservative movement, under the direction of the clergy and the nobility. But under Fascism even the leaders are men of the people.

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THOMAS THE CYNIC Do you believe that every popular movement led by men of humble origin is democratic?

PROFESSOR PICKUP Obviously. That is what the word 'democratic' means.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Was the action taken by the Russian Communist Party against the Constituent Assembly, the Georgian Republic, the Kronstadt Soviet, the democratic, Socialist and anarchist groups, and finally against all opposition inside the Communist Party, democratic?

PROFESSOR PICKUP No, for the simple reason that the Bolsheviks desired to fulfil their aims without troubling about majority approval. Mussolini and Hitler, on the other hand, received full powers from parliament.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Do you think that the consent of parliament and a widespread popular vote are sufficient to make a government democratic?

PROFESSOR PICKUP Of course. Universal suffrage and democracy are the same thing.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Allow me to give you a reply taken from Proudhon. In his *La Révolution sociale démontrée par le coup d'État du 20 décembre* he asked:

Who then named the Constituent Assembly, which was full of legitimists, monarchists, nobles, generals and prelates? Universal suffrage. Who was responsible for December 10th, 1848? Universal suffrage. Who produced the Legislative Assembly? Universal suffrage. Who gave the *carte blanche* of December 20th? Universal suffrage. Who put an end to the *Corps Législatif* of 1852? Cannot one say that it was universal suffrage that began the reaction of April 16th, hid behind Barbès' back on May 15th, crossed its arms on December 2nd? . . .

Those questions refer to only a few years of French political history. Don't you think that hundreds of others could be added to them to-day?

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MR. W. What is democracy if it isn't universal suffrage?

THOMAS THE CYNIC Democracy is universal suffrage plus certain conditions. The Greeks, who were the first to experience it, described four of them as follows: *isonomia*, or equality of rights before the law; liberty (which is a word plain enough in itself); *isocratia*, or political equality; and *isegoria*, or freedom of speech. The Cynics went deeper when they stated that true liberty could not exist until all social differences between citizens had disappeared. As long as this idea remained abstract, it seemed irrefutable. But after the Russian experience some explanation is required. Because, if the elimination of classes leads to the complete nationalization of all social life, the certain result is not the most perfect democracy but perhaps the most complete slavery the world has ever known.

MR. W. Jumping from the thoughts of the ancients to dreams of Utopia in this way does not help me in the least to see more clearly into the only problem that interests me.

PROFESSOR PICKUP The arguments for and against democracy are still what they were in the time of Herodotus, as he transmitted them to us in the celebrated discussions between Otanes, Megabyzus and Darius. Little is to be gained by recalling them now. Modern political science has added practically nothing to them. Even subsequent political experience has failed to add anything. The Greeks did not, of course, know of the Five Year Plan or the New Deal, but no doubt they had something similar. They even knew all the forms of democracy, including the fictitious kind that serves to inflame men's minds for a foreign war. Athens, in fact, has left us instructive examples of how wars of rival interests may disguise themselves as wars of rival ideologies. Let us therefore save time by leaving philosophy aside and sticking to politics.

THOMAS THE CYNIC It is only comparatively recently that democracy has assumed the specific meaning of government by the majority of the people. Before 1848 it meant political power

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based on the support of the poor part of the nation, the peasants, the artisans, the petty bourgeoisie, the labourers. Universal suffrage was then considered an instrument of democracy, not the essence of democracy. History has shown that the widening of the franchise has not always resulted in the strengthening of democracy. The franchise has sometimes been extended by reactionaries for the specific purpose of weakening democracy. Numbers without knowledge are a tool adaptable for all purposes.

PROFESSOR PICKUP That reminds me of a conversation I had with Guglielmo Ferrero, whom we visited at Geneva. 'King Humbert's democratic reforms after 1880 were carried out for obvious reactionary reasons,' he said to us. 'The electorate was increased from one hundred and fifty thousand to two millions. The King believed that an electorate of two millions, consisting largely of poor and ignorant people, could be better managed by the Government than an electorate of one hundred and fifty thousand. And in fact it was so. Under the mask of extending democracy King Humbert succeeded in strengthening the independence of the executive.'

THOMAS THE CYNIC The despots in the medieval Italian communes imposed themselves in a similar way, using the support of the people to overthrow the powerful leading families. Peter the Great overcame Mazeppa's national movement in the Ukraine by satisfying the people's claims, thus succeeding in dividing the Cossacks from their leader. But Fascism can boast of having perfected the art of killing modern democracy with the arms the latter forged for itself.

MR. W. All this sounds very confusing to me. If you go on like this, won't you end up by giving the word democracy a metaphysical meaning?

THOMAS THE CYNIC Democracy means self-government of the people. The support of masses who renounce self-government, whether through ignorance, deceit or violence, does not

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legitimize any regime. One may recognize it as representing ignorance, deceit and violence, but not as a democracy.

PROFESSOR PICKUP I fear that a democracy such as you imagine has never existed. Apropos of ignorance, can you tell me of a country whose people you would describe as sufficiently well-educated in political matters to allow them a free hand in the intricate problems of social and political life?

THOMAS THE CYNIC The school of democracy is in local self-government. For a worker to take a serious part in the life of his trade union, or a peasant to take part in the life of his village, there is no need of higher education. The first test to be applied in judging an alleged democracy is the degree of self-government attained by its local institutions. If the master's rule in the factories is absolute, if the trade unions are controlled by bureaucracies, if the bishop or some family is absolute master of the parish, if a man who eats out of the hand of central headquarters rules the roost in the local branch of the party, if the province is governed by the representative of the central government, there can be no true and complete democracy. Only local government can accustom men to responsibility and independence, and enable them to take part in the wider life of the state. In all countries the democratic and Socialist parties have been the most active in promoting centralization at the expense of local and regional autonomy, being faithful in this to the tradition of the Jacobins, who regarded the hegemony of the capital over the rest of the country as a weapon against the influence of the nobles and the priests. Another cause of the tendency towards centralization in democratic and Socialist parties is that their supporters, peasants, workers and the petty bourgeoisie, are among the poorest sections of the population, and it seems necessary to invoke the assistance of the central authorities on their behalf. Thus the state comes to be looked on as a universal provider. On the one hand continual subsidies and protective legislation enlarge the



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*clientèle* of the democratic and Socialist parties, on the other they stifle the local independence which is the true foundation of democracy. Hence in some countries the following paradox has occurred; democracy has completely collapsed almost immediately after the democratic and Socialist parties have reached their maximum material and numerical strength. If one wishes, therefore, to find out whether democracy in a given country is in good health or bad, one must not attach excessive importance to the number of votes that the democratic or Socialist parties receive, or to the circulation of their papers; but one must discover in what honour local government is held and what spirit prevails in the municipalities, the trade unions, the co-operatives, the schools, the local branches of the political parties, the parishes, in fact the public bodies of all kinds to which the ordinary man has access. From these an intelligent observer can make an infallible diagnosis.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Fascism arises as a protest against the centralization of the democratic parties.

THOMAS THE OYNIC It is true that in its early stages Fascism draws support from sections of the population who consider themselves oppressed by centralization and combat and sabotage it, aspiring to greater independence, not for the sake of giving freer rein to the self-government of the people but the better to escape their own social obligations and safeguard their own privileges. But as soon as Fascism is in power it establishes a degree of centralization which leaves the people no self-government at all, and is accurately described as totalitarian by the Fascist leaders themselves.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Unity, properly understood, is not incompatible with diversity.

THOMAS THE OYNIC The only diversity that Fascism tolerates is that of myth. It does not permit diversity of thought genuinely in search of truth.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Thought is often subversive. True liberty

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lies in order. When everyone is in his place, then there is liberty. The word 'hierarchy' is the keynote of Fascism. Democracy has a uniform, arithmetical vision of the people, and since there is no uniformity in nature, and men are not born equal, that vision is abstract and false. Fascism, on the other hand, is organic. A friend of mine, Professor McDougall, has proved in his *Social Psychology* that many men have an instinct for submission, the satisfaction of which alone can make them happy. They are the raw material, or, if you prefer it, the manure of history. Why should they be confused with and put on the same level as men who have the instinct of command? The passage in *Mein Kampf* in which Hitler compares the masses to a woman is already famous.

Like a woman — he wrote — whose feelings are determined less by abstract reason than by a kind of indefinable, emotional longing for fulfilling strength, and who, therefore prefers to bow to the strong than to command the weak, the masses prefer him who comes to them as a master to him who comes to them with an appeal, and feel inwardly more satisfied by a doctrine which tolerates no rival than by Liberal freedom. With the latter it knows very little what to do, and even derives a sense of neglect from it. The masses are as little conscious of the shamelessness of their spiritual terrorization as they are of the shocking abuse of their human freedom, and the inner coherence of the whole doctrine escapes them. They see only the ruthless force and brutality of its expressions, all devoted to a single purpose, to which they finally always bend. If Social-Democracy is opposed by another, more veracious doctrine characterized by equal brutality of execution, the latter will be victorious. . . .

THOMAS THE GYNIC I hope you do not expect me to start discussing 'theories' of that kind. But I should like to know how you reconcile them with the alleged democratic content of Fascism.

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PROFESSOR PICKUP That is easy to explain. In a traditional democracy the sense of social life, together with the sense of authority, is weakened. From their earliest years human beings find themselves confronted with a multiplicity of authorities. In addition to the family, there is the kindergarten, the school, the church, the children’s court, the public assistance authorities, and so on and so forth. Many authorities are equivalent to no authority at all. But that is not the worst. In democratic life authority has become more and more impersonal. One has constantly less and less to do with human beings and more and more to do with offices, rubber-stamps, telephones and typewriters. Fascism restores authority, puts every man in his place, eliminates harmful social elements and re-establishes order and true liberty. In a more elevated spiritual sense, Fascism frees the country from the influence of inferior races and ideologies imported from abroad, and thus restores the profound unity of the people, the intimate harmony between the individual and the community which is the fundamental basis of true democracy. Diversity of opinion disappears in a totalitarian state because the causes which give rise to it are lacking. The whole people spontaneously and freely think the same thing at the same time, and, to use a phrase more familiar in another context, ‘form a single sheep-fold under a single shepherd’.

THOMAS THE CYNIC I have nothing to object to in the employment of the word ‘sheep-fold’. It is apt. But let me add that your proof by induction that Fascism, together with national independence, assures true individual liberty, is a banal piece of sophistry. It is neither original nor exclusive, and may serve the most varied purposes, according to the requirements of the propaganda of him who employs it. For the Catholic Church, for example, liberty of thought lies only in the adoption of her doctrines. Since truth is one and indivisible, outside it there can be nothing but error, and to admit the right to differ from it would be to admit the right of error. Error has no rights,

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and to think falsely is not liberty, but slavery. Consequently the only way of guaranteeing liberty of thought is to impose the universal adoption of the Catholic faith. Fortunately the Catholic Church is no longer in a position to do this, and we are able to reject its liberty and enjoy our own slavery. In more recent times the same piece of sophistry has assumed a 'Marxist' disguise. Stalin, when asked why parties and papers of different shades of opinion were not permitted in Russia, even on the basis of the Socialist constitution, answered in this manner: 'In our country that would be entirely artificial. It is known that parties and opinions are formed on the basis of class interests. We have suppressed classes and established Socialism, therefore we all think in the same way and one party is sufficient.' If in spite of the abolition of classes there are Russians who continue to think in a way different from the Government, they deserve to be shot, because, according to this argument, there being no class-struggle in Russia, there should be no struggle of ideas. The logic is apparently without a flaw. What revealed truth is to the Pope and the proletariat is to Stalin, the nation is to the Fascist, who proclaims: 'Individual liberty is only fulfilled in a country's liberty of action, made possible by the totalitarian state.' German and Italian university professors have written learned books in support of this piece of idiocy, and have succeeded in muddying and confusing the clear and distinct ideas of personal liberty and national independence. The fact that it is possible for such rubbish to gain currency in our time proves the extent to which we have returned to barbarism, and, alas! that barbarism is not confined to one side only. Certainly it is not difficult to expose the hollowness of such reasoning, which consists of drawing false consequences from a partially or apparently correct premise. But, in this case, is it really worth while? Those who use it are the first to laugh at it among themselves; and its effectiveness when used upon the masses derives not from intellectual conviction but from more primitive

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urges. It is well known that the idea of personal liberty and freedom of conscience is not taught by way of the intellect.

MR. W. To be perfectly frank with you, I find all this a little tedious.

PROFESSOR PICKUP On this occasion, I note with pleasure, it is my turn to bring the conversation back from the abstract to the concrete. Let us begin by leaving psychology aside. Everyone knows, or thinks he knows, his own psychology, and can only make vague guesses about that of his neighbours. Of strangers it is better not to speak. To try to judge the mentality of a whole people is an act of real temerity, which we shall leave to street-corner orators. What I have just said about the situation of individuals in totalitarian states must be considered in a strictly philosophical light. In political language (since 'philosophy is philosophy, while politics are politics') let us, in order to avoid fallacies, note the fictions in which democracy is so rich. Democratic self-government is, and always has been, fictitious. The only progress that has taken place has been in the method of disguising the fact. Aristotle criticized the method of electing magistrates in Crete, which was based on the amount of applause that followed the nomination of each candidate in the assembly. He also criticized the system in Sparta, where candidates were not eligible unless they took part in frequent public banquets at their own expense. This, of course, was not within everybody's reach. That was a fine kind of democratic simplicity! Applause and banquets play a no less important part in modern democracies, but they are not mentioned in the electoral laws. You are bound to admit that the participation of the members of a party in the life of a local branch may be most active and conscious, but that their opinion only really counts when they vote on such things as the acquisition of a new hat-stand for the local meeting-hall. In all important matters the party is in practice controlled by a small group of professional politicians. A German-Italian sociologist, Robert

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Michels, has shown that all political movements, even the most democratic, are in reality oligarchies. Oh! yes, I know all about congresses. They are called and organized by the dominant oligarchy. At plenary sessions the provincial delegates are allowed to applaud or hiss the great speakers of the party, but the real decisions are made at committees behind the scenes. The election of the new executive is left to the last session of all, and it generally takes place late in the evening, when a considerable proportion of the delegates are already at the station, waiting for their trains; and the chairman, in a hoarse and inaudible voice, reads out a list of names drawn up by a small committee, whereupon, by a show of hands, and amid general inattention, the congress delegates its sovereign power to the dominant oligarchy, composed of a number of professional politicians, for another year.

THOMAS THE CYNIC In short, professor, you are trying to convince me that Fascism did not fall from the skies, and that men were educated in passive obedience even before Fascism began. I am fully convinced of it. Had it been otherwise Fascism would never have succeeded in establishing itself. There is no other explanation of the fact that all the Nazis had to do to gain control over the millions of members of the parties hostile to them was to destroy and disperse their organizations. Even now, if one frequents the society of anti-Fascists, one can detect, if one has fine senses, the slight odour of the barrack-room that clings to their threadbare garments. How intolerant they, the victims of intolerance, are towards all opposition! With what assurance they claim liberty for the countries subject to Fascist tyranny and defend tyranny where it is exercised by their own parties! Fascism may well rejoice, for it is the sole beneficiary of this general decay of the sense of liberty and human dignity. Nevertheless, there are among its opponents those who try to compete with it, degrading Socialism into a kind of Red Fascism, as I have said, and the facts show that by

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so doing they only succeed in piling new defeats upon the old. Fascism does not fear competition in human contempt. If Socialism is too weak to conquer as liberty, if it tries to impose itself as tyranny, the results are catastrophic. Only to Fascism is everything permitted. Fascist criticism of the inadequacy of bourgeois democracy is a patent fraud, for the Fascist movement does not aim at the elimination of the defects it criticizes, but destroys all the good in the old system (such as political liberties and judicial safeguards), while preserving its defects. Hitler learned to appreciate democracy during the war. At the front, as an orderly corporal attached to regimental headquarters, he was most devoted towards his superiors, and suffered at feeling the incomprehension which divided them from the soldiers. Having known the disinherited people of the night-shelters, he understood things that escaped his superiors. Hitler admired Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau, and the far greater contact the democratic governments had with their people than the governments of the Central Powers, in other words their superiority in deception. This was the most important political lesson he learned from the Great War. The rest of democracy he has never known.

MR. W. I did not know that detail. It proves his practical sense, and shows the mistake of those who regard him as a visionary.

PROFESSOR PICKUP The political superiority of Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau and their brilliant capacity for deception were certainly not based on the self-government of their peoples. In other periods exactly similar qualities have been shown by political and military leaders who were far from being democratic. The credit of having thrown fresh light on the notion of the political class, or *elite*, and having demonstrated, in the teeth of democratic doctrines and the Marxist conception of economic classes, that the cause of the diversity of the various forms of government lies in their different origins, belongs to

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two Italian sociologists, Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca. The directing personnel of Fascism, by its origin and recruitment, unites the civil as well as the military virtues, the aristocratic as well as the plebeian ones. No other leadership can guide mankind safely through these stormy times. As for the relations between the masses and the state, there is no need to be a prophet to foresee that so long as government exists, whatever its political form may be, it will always be the privilege of a restricted few. A profound gulf always divides the governors from the governed. A mass-government is unthinkable.

THOMAS THE CYNIC A sincere democrat who came to the same conclusion could not avoid becoming an anarchist. But to return to the subject we are discussing, what concerns us now is not the nature of the state, but the relations between the political class and the people. In democratic countries the party struggle takes the form of a competition to gain the confidence of the masses and becomes a conflict of interests, ideas, passions, social, ethical or religious principles, according to the country's state of evolution. The more intense the struggle between the political oligarchies, the greater the importance of the people. But where there is only one party, the people has no importance at all. The political personnel of every party is modified and transformed by the absorption into the original nucleus of representatives of wider and wider strata of the population won over to their influence. Even the declared enemies of democracy try to sanction their candidacy for power by maintaining that they have the majority of the people behind them. Fascism itself is no exception to this rule. It criticizes the defects and the fictions of 'bourgeois' democracy. When it comes into power it perpetuates them in an aggravated form. It criticizes the limitations imposed upon freedom of expression of opinion by plutocratic forces. Under Fascism liberty of expression of opinion disappears, but the plutocracy remains. It criticizes the way in which party apparatuses hamper genuine



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self-government. Under Fascism all self-government is abolished and only the apparatus remains. It criticizes democratic centralization, but under Fascism the most harmless local autonomies are suppressed. It criticizes the predominance of the executive, but ends, like all dictatorships, with the tyranny of the executive. Fascism preserves only the apparent and superficial features of democracy — demonstrations, mass spectacles, mass organization, mass plebiscites — after killing the spirit and tendency to self-government. In homage to the prejudices of the period, which no longer tolerate absolutist regimes based on divine sanction, it presents itself in the guise of 'true' democracy, being in reality only its substitute.

PROFESSOR PICKUP The elimination of parties to which Fascism aspires results in the suppression of demagogic competition and the exploitation of selfish class instincts. In the sole party that survives there is a greater likelihood of the best men coming to the top and representing the country's feelings before the Leader.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Dictatorship of a sole party is nonsense. As soon as a party abuses its strength and suppresses all others it also suppresses itself. Diversity of opinion in the face of real problems, and the discontents of this or that section of the population, which can no longer find an outlet through the old parties, which have been done away with, lead to the formation of conflicting groups and tendencies within the only surviving party. They too are forcibly suppressed as 'attempts against public security'. The party loses all internal democracy, if it ever had any, and is transformed into an organ of the state, ceasing to be a political party and preserving only its name. All dictatorships of a single party have ended in this way.

MR. W. That is a technical necessity, and there is no need to take it too much to heart. The essential thing, whether in a democracy or under a dictatorship, is to reserve well-paid jobs for supporters of the winning party. Under all regimes, con-

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sulting the people is rather like putting a nickel in a slot machine. If you put the right coin in the right slot you get the required result. There are different kinds of machines, but to moralize about the differences seems a little exaggerated to me. If the Austrian plebiscite of 1938 had been carried out by Schuschnigg instead of by Hitler the result would certainly have been in favour of Austrian independence. But, as it was managed by Hitler, there was a huge majority in favour of union with Germany. If the electoral slot machine in Russia had been managed by Trotsky instead of by Stalin, Trotsky, instead of being an exile in Mexico to-day, would have a unanimous party and a unanimous people behind him, and would give rigorous instructions to prevent the 'free vote' from expressing anything but unanimity in his favour. Imagine the lyrical accents with which Romain Rolland, Lion Feuchtwanger and *New Masses* would celebrate the triumph of Trotskyist democracy! The sole revolutionary function left to Stalin would be to let himself be shot by 'proletarian justice' as 'a vile Fascist reptile'.

THOMAS THE CYNIC There are countries in which governments are often beaten at elections without the heavens falling.

MR. W. In that case the opposition party apparatus must be stronger than the government party apparatus.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Sometimes it even happens that the weakest and poorest of the opposition parties wins, having the most just arguments on its side.

MR. W. Ah! I see you believe in miracles.

THOMAS THE CYNIC If I may for one moment abandon the role of cynic that I have assumed in these conversations, I will frankly confess that I *only* believe in miracles. Other things I have no need to believe, because I see them. But I believe in the miracle of liberty, although I see all the things that are opposed to it. If I had to draw a picture of the free city in which I place my faith, as against the picture of national

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slavery of which you have just reminded us, I could find no better words to describe it than those of the Funeral Oration of Pericles.

The same persons take council together about private and about public things, and, though intent on their private business, have a sufficient knowledge of public affairs; because we consider a man who does not take part in them not only idle but of little account, since we do not believe that discussion is harmful to action, but, on the contrary, that it is harmful not to be fully aware, as a result of previous discussion, of what it is that ought to be done.

MR. W. Please leave poetry aside and revert to politics.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Life reconciles what thought divides. There is no political system, however tyrannical, that has no ear to listen to the people's grievances, nor any democracy that is not based on an organization. In the struggle between Boniface VIII and Philip the Handsome, John of Paris pronounced the famous formula: *Populo faciente et Deo inspirante*. The Leninist conception of democratic centralism and the Mussolinian conception of authoritarian democracy are made of the same stuff. The political history of our country is very instructive in this respect. At the beginning of American democracy the electorate was officially guided by legislative bodies which appointed special nominating committees (congressional or legislative caucuses) which selected the candidates. It seemed an advance, but was in fact the reverse, when about 1825 the elections were left to the free initiative of the people. Demagogues like Aaron Burr arose. Elections became an expensive business, managed by unscrupulous and unprincipled professional politicians, who imposed themselves on public opinion like trusts on the market. Liberty and public morality cannot be said to have gained anything thereby. The older system seems the more honest to me.

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MR. W. Let me suggest a slogan. 'Back to our origins!' Well, what do you think of it?

THOMAS THE CYNIC Not at all bad. 'Back to our origins!' suggests the purity of a spring in an Alpine valley, the innocence of the cradle, the bliss of the Golden Age. Moreover, there is something aristocratic and distinguished about it, and it is a magnificent reply to every problem, even if its origins are recent or unknown. As for the suppression of the existing democratic system and a return to the system of congressional and legislative caucuses, I do not think it would be easy to bring it about with the peaceful consent of the country. Similar reforms in Fascist countries have been made possible only by terrorism.

PROFESSOR PICKUP The difference between consent obtained by persuasion and consent obtained by force is only apparent, and is independent of philosophical reflection. We discussed this question at length with Giovanni Gentile, the Fascist philosopher, whom we met in Rome.

The distinction between moral and material force is ingenuous — he said to us. — All force is moral force, because it is always directed at the will. Whether the argument used is preaching or the bludgeon, it can only be effective with the consent of him at whom it is directed. What the nature of the persuasive argument should be, whether preaching or the bludgeon, is not a subject for abstract discussion.

The transition from one political regime to another is like pulling down a house and building another with the same bricks. You can't avoid using a pickaxe.

THOMAS THE CYNIC To conclude with some practical advice, I should like to lay down some principles for the organization of the Fascist Party, which should be considered as the shadow of the future dictatorship. The technique of organization plays an important role in authoritarian systems. This can best be seen in studying the history of the competition between rival

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but similar movements. I believe the superior organization of the Jesuits was to a large extent responsible for their success at the expense of other orders within the Catholic Church, and I think the same applies to the victory of Marx over Bakunin in the First International, to that of Lenin over Martov in the Russian Social-Democratic movement, to that of Mussolini over D'Annunzio, and to that of Hitler over Ludendorff and his other competitors on the Right. A study of the methods of St. Ignatius, Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Mussolini and Hitler has enabled me to draw up a number of exact rules on the best methods of building up a movement docile to the leaders' will even unto death. Don't be afraid, I shall not inflict a long lecture on you. As I did after our conversation on Fascist propaganda, I shall merely leave a few quotations with you incorporating Hitler's ideas on the subject.

### ORGANIZATION AS A NECESSARY EVIL

'A brilliant idea arises in the mind of a man, who feels himself called upon to impart it to others. He preaches his belief, and gradually wins a definite circle of followers. This direct and personal transmission of ideas from one man to another is the ideal and the most natural method. But, as the number of adherents of the new doctrine increases, it gradually becomes more and more impossible for the originator of the idea to exert a direct, personal influence upon them, to guide them and to lead them. In proportion as direct and intimate contact is eliminated as a consequence of the growth of the movement, the necessity for an organization to keep it together grows too. The ideal method being therewith eliminated, the necessary evil of organization takes its place. Small local sub-groups are formed, which, in a political movement, represent the germ-cells of the later organization' (*Mein Kampf*, pages 380-1).

### THE RACE IS NOT ALWAYS TO THE SWIFT...

Propaganda must 'go far ahead' of organization and 'the latter must first win the appropriate human material' (page 649). It is 'more effective to spread an idea abroad by propaganda from a

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centre for a considerable period of time and then carefully to examine and test the gradually accumulating human material for individuals with the capacity for leadership' (page 650), in order 'gradually to indoctrinate a small group of people, thus gathering the human material which will later form the basis of an organization' (page 651).

In 1919 Hitler joined the German Workers' party, which then had six members.

'Here it was still possible to work,' he wrote, 'and the smaller the movement was, the more readily could it be properly welded into shape. Here the content, the aim and the way could still be defined, and in a way which was no longer possible in the bigger parties already in existence' (page 243). He became convinced 'that it was in a tiny movement such as that that the way could be laid for the elevation of the nation' (page 243).

AND THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GOD BUT ME . . .

'With us the Leader and the idea is one, and every party member has to obey the commands of the Leader, who incorporates the idea and alone knows its ultimate aim' (Hitler, in the controversy with Otto Strasser, 1930). 'The first chairman of a local group is appointed by his immediate superior, and he becomes its responsible leader. All committees are subject to his authority, and not the reverse. The responsible leader, the first chairman, distributes the work. The same principle applies in the next higher grade, the district organization, the regional organization, etc. Every leader is appointed from above and at the same time given unlimited power and authority' (*Mein Kampf*, page 378).

At the head of the organization there must be 'no parliamentary committee', but 'the principle of absolute responsibility must be introduced'. 'The first president is responsible for the entire leadership of the movement. He shares the authority of the committees beneath him as well as that of all those responsible for all other necessary activities. Therewith each one of these gentlemen has unlimited responsibility in the tasks imposed on him. He is only responsible to the first president' (page 661).

'There are no majority decisions, but only responsible individuals. Each will have his advisers, but one man alone makes the decision' (page 501).

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## NO FUSION WITH RELATED MOVEMENTS

'It is the greatest mistake to believe that the strength of a movement is increased by fusion with other similar groups' (page 384). 'Temporary advantages may result from the fusion of similar political parties, but in the long run any success won in this manner is the cause of inner weaknesses which will subsequently appear' (pages 384-5). 'The greatness of a movement can only be guaranteed by the unrestricted development of its inner strength, and its enduring growth until it is finally victorious over all its competitors' (page 385).

'Similar movements should compete, not unite' (page 571-2). 'In this way the strongest and swiftest will come to the top and be the victor' (pages 573). 'A weak group will never turn into a strong group by co-operating with other groups. On the contrary, a stronger group may often be weakened by such co-operation' (page 577). World-shattering triumphs only result from 'titanic struggles of units' (page 578). A people's ascendancy can only result from 'the absolute leadership of the very best section' (page 581).

## INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

'The best organization is not that which has the largest but that which has the smallest apparatus intervening between the leadership and the individual members. For the object of the organization is the transmission of a definite idea — which at first always arises in the mind of a single individual — to a large number of people, as well as its transformation into reality' (page 380). 'The organization must only be subdivided when the authority of the spiritual founder and the school associated with him is unconditionally recognized. The geopolitical significance of such a centre of the movement cannot be over-estimated under these conditions. Only the existence of such a centre, surrounded with the magic glamour of a Rome or a Mecca, can in the long run give a movement the strength which lies in inner unity and the recognition of a centre representing this unity' (page 381). The growth 'of the ideal, moral and actual strength and prestige of this centre of inspiration and leadership must take place among the masses, among whom the innumerable germ-cells of the movement lead to the formation of ever new organized bonds' (page 381-2). 'Therefore the apparatus

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of an organization must only be built up to the extent that the spiritually ideal authority of the centre is unconditionally preserved. In politics this can often be guaranteed only by force' (page 382). 'At first all activity must be concentrated at a single headquarters . . . A circle of absolutely reliable supporters must be formed, as well as a school for the subsequent spreading of the idea. This centre must gain the necessary authority for winning the greatest possible visible successes' (page 382). 'Local groups must only be formed when the authority of the central leadership is unconditionally recognized' (page 383). 'The formation of district or regional groups must not take place just because they seem to be required, but only when it is certain that the central authority will be unconditionally recognized' (page 383). 'Furthermore the formation of any group must be dependent on a man with the necessary capacity for leadership being forthcoming.' (page 383). 'A political organization without the necessary leadership is as worthless as an army without officers' (page 384).

## MEMBERS NEED NOT THINK

'It is not essential that every single individual who fights for these beliefs should possess full insight into the deepest ideas and trains of thought of the leader of the movement. What is much more essential is that the broad outlines should be made clear to him and that the essential principles should be so branded into him that he is unshakeably convinced of the necessity of the triumph of his movement and its teaching' (page 508). What is needed is 'the crude soldier', 'because otherwise inner discipline is not attainable' (page 509). One must remember 'that the strength of a political party does not lie in the individual member possessing the greatest possible degree of intelligence and independence, but rather in the docility with which the members follow intelligent leadership' (page 810). 'The future of a movement is conditioned by the fanaticism and impatience with which its followers represent it as the sole right one and sweep aside other movements of a similar nature' (page 384). 'The greatness of every powerful organization which incorporates an idea lies in the religious fanaticism with which, convinced of its own rightness, it sweeps everything before it. If an idea is right in itself, and takes up the struggle on this earth armed in this manner, it is unconquerable, and persecution will only increase its inner strength' (page 385).



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In conclusion may I add to these principles of the Führer a saying of one of his most valorous followers. It is as concise as the inscription on a tombstone.

‘The thinking inferior is the natural enemy of his superior’  
(Point 12 in *Leitsätze für meine spätere Dienstzeit, in seinen Leutnantsjahren aufgestellt-Memoiren*, by Captain Roehm, page 35).

D I A L O G U E   X V

ON THE COUP D'ÉTAT WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE AUTHORITIES

MR. W. I read a newspaper article last night about the general strike that took place in Switzerland in November 1918. It said: 'The Federal Army, which, thanks to its discipline, saved the country from the Communist peril, lost in those unhappy days three thousand seven hundred and ninety-three men.' Was there really such bloodthirsty fighting at that time in Switzerland?

THOMAS THE CYNIC No. There was no fighting at all, and the troops did not have to intervene. If you had read the article to the end you would have discovered that the figure referred to soldiers who died of 'flu.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Oh! I see. The strikers gave the 'flu to the troops in barracks.

THOMAS THE CYNIC I don't think so. I don't even think the writer of the article had any intention of discrediting the Socialists when he mentioned that large number of dead. More probably he only wanted to dramatize the peaceful victory gained by the party of order on that occasion. What, in the eyes of many people, is a victory without bloodshed? If there are no deaths on the barricades, it is necessary to invent them, or to serve up the casualty list of a 'flu epidemic instead. That was the reason why Napoleon III described the simple police operation by which he eliminated his parliamentary opponents as one of the most brilliant feats of arms ever accomplished by the French army, the history of which, one is bound to admit, is by no means obscure.

MR. W. Is theatricalism so deeply ingrained in politics?

PROFESSOR PICKUP If you are referring to the tragic and

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religious sense of the ancients, my answer, without hesitation, is yes. But to-day the art of the theatre has degenerated into a pastime, and the rites of religion have become nothing but cold conventionalism. It is therefore not surprising that men should seek in the tumultuous vicissitudes of politics the satisfactions they once derived from the stage or in the temple. In the sixth chapter of the *Poetics* Aristotle describes the ultimate effect of tragedy as *catharsis*, the purging of the mind of the spectator by pity and fear. It would be rather daring to suggest that the audience emerges from the theatres of to-day with its mind purged by pity and fear. Only one spectacle survived that seems to have preserved the effect that Greek tragedy had on the spectators, and that was the bull-fight; and observe that as long as the bull-fight was honoured in Spain, the country lived in peace, apart from and indifferent to the conflicts by which Europe was torn. When the bull-fight became decadent and degenerated into a pastime it was replaced by civil war. The pacifists who used to protest against the slaughter of the bulls would be very happy if that was all they had to complain about now.

MR. W. Do you suppose that if tragic spectacles and bull-fights were organized everywhere wars and insurrections might be eliminated?

PROFESSOR PICKUP Alas! the mechanism of *catharsis* cannot be imposed at will. Every period has its own form of purification. We attended a performance of *Oedipus Rex* in the Greek amphitheatre at Syracuse. You will remember that the fashionable public flocked to it as if to a horse-race. But we did not find it moving in the least. Now Fascism provides a really tragic spectacle. It achieves the restoration of order after provoking disorder, and imposes discipline after whipping up the most violent passions of the mob. Many are baffled by the reversal of Fascist practice after the seizure of power. In my opinion they do not pay due attention to the profound and

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radical *catharsis* that Fascism undergoes (and makes the whole country undergo) in the course of the insurrection that brings it into power. The Fascist leader himself emerges from it entirely transformed. From an agitator he becomes a statesman. The incapacity of the Socialists in Central and Western Europe to achieve the insurrection proves their incapacity to carry the contemporary tragedy through to the end. But whenever the last act of the tragedy needs to be staged Fascism presents itself upon the scene. It becomes the protagonist of the catastrophe in the face of which Socialism steps back affrighted after having proclaimed it and prepared for it for decades. Fascism finds the masses in a state of dissatisfaction similar to that of the audience at a popular theatre when it is told that the performance must be broken off because the principal actor is indisposed.

THOMAS THE GYNIC I think we need proceed no further with this theatrical comparison. It has been useful to recall the spectacular and fictional nature of stage productions, which lend themselves to some appropriate considerations concerning the Fascist *coup d'état*, but there are also other considerations to be taken into account.

PROFESSOR PICKUP I agree that we need proceed no further with the theatre. The word itself is a very equivocal one to-day. To the *catharsis* proper to tragedy the insurrection adds the impressiveness of human blood really flowing in the streets. You cannot deny that the decadence of modern religions is a consequence of the giving-up of blood-sacrifices. The churches are little frequented by the masses, who are indifferent to religious services because in them the sacrifice is only symbolic. The smoke of burning victims no longer rises from the altars of the Lord, and incense is a ridiculous substitute for it. Catholic priests believe that in the Eucharist they receive the real body and the real blood of Christ, but that is not sufficient to placate man's cannibalistic instincts. If they distributed real flesh and

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real blood from the altar-steps, the churches would be too small to contain the crowds that would flock to every Mass. The prevalence of the patriotic over the religious cult in our time is a result of the fact that patriotism demands from the young a perpetual readiness to lay down their lives. The state is a madonna who thirsts for blood. From the blood-sacrifices of ancient times there survives in man an obscure belief that it is only by the letting of blood that the wrath of the supernatural powers can be assuaged, or a favour obtained of them. Western Socialism made the mistake of being vegetarian. To wonder how Fascism and Bolshevism have managed to retain so many supporters although they have spilled so much blood is to reveal a complete non-comprehension of the secret needs of the popular mind. The blood that they have spilled is not the weakness of Fascism and Bolshevism, but their strength, and I mean their spiritual strength. The leaders of the movement do not conceal it, and they recall 'those who gave their lives for the revolution' on every solemn occasion. I am convinced that the motive for this is not pity for the dead, but that it is an admonition to their opponents; in other words, the new regime has paid the due 'blood-price' and therefore it is regularized and irrevocable.

THOMAS THE CYNIC The number of Italian Fascists who fell in political conflicts between 1919 and 1926 was about four hundred and fifty. The number of anti-Fascists killed during the same period was about two thousand. Since human lives were concerned, both figures are large. But the Fascist propagandists have felt a need to exaggerate the number of the victims of their own party, and it is customary on all occasions for them to talk of 'thousands of Fascist martyrs'. I do not believe that the intention of this repeated lie is to deceive the gods, to persuade them that the 'blood-price' was so very much greater than it really was. There is, however, no doubt that it achieves the object of deceiving many men. The heroic legend that Fascism has woven round the somewhat banal events that

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preceded its accession to power is one of the things on which it relies to justify its unconstitutional character.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Not one of us understands military matters, and therefore we are not in a position seriously to discuss insurrections and *coups d'états*.

THOMAS THE CYNIC An insurrection is always primarily a political operation and only secondarily a military operation, professor. But the peculiarity of a Fascist *coup d'état* is that it is essentially a political operation accompanied by demonstrations and parades of a military nature. The use of violence is only indispensable to Fascism to terrorize the Socialists and democrats. Once this has been achieved, it is child's play to dislodge those survivors of the old political class who still cling to positions of authority in the state. The mere threat of force is sufficient to put them to flight. The Fascist leader shows his talents by disguising their rout as a brilliant military operation and presenting himself to public opinion as Caesar *redivivus*. This piece of bluff is made all the easier inasmuch as the alleged Fascist insurrection takes place in an atmosphere of expectation and panic very similar to the atmosphere of a real insurrection. In his *Letter to a Comrade* of October 1917, Lenin enumerates the conditions that make an insurrection possible as follows: manifest incapacity of the governing class to govern; general hostility and indignation towards the established order; and (for a Socialist insurrection) middle-class sympathy with the revolutionary workers. Trotsky has described the final act of the insurrection as 'a blow at a paralytic'. But true insurrections are not confined to striking blows at old and paralytic governments; they also shatter the whole state apparatus, replace it with a new one and alter the social and political relations between citizens. Fascism, on the other hand, carries out its *coup d'état* actually with the co-operation of the state authorities, who have already helped it to terrorize the country. The paralytic's friends and familiars are among the most

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zealous in pushing Fascism towards the throne. The fateful march to the capital finally takes place in a sleeping-car.

MR. W. Oh, I see. The obscure tragedy of which our dear professor spoke is in reality a farce.

THOMAS THE CYNIC Let us rather call it a tragi-comedy, an ambiguous *genre* which it is anything but easy to stage. The happy ending does not require courage but plenty of astuteness. The old political class will try intriguing to the last. At this point, Mr. W., the experience of other dictators may be of assistance to you. Know, then, that when you feel yourself strong enough in the country to try to establish your dictatorship a certain number of political manoeuvres will be absolutely indispensable if you are to create the right atmosphere for your *coup d'état*. First of all you must reassure the real powers-that-be in the economic life of the country. Through confidential intermediaries you will promise each one of them what he most wants to hear. You will inform the trade union leaders that wages will not be touched; on the contrary, if the cost of living increases, they will be raised, 'because the well-being of the country is primarily bound up with the well-being of the popular classes'. You will assure the leaders of the industrialists' organizations that wages will be immediately reduced, that being the only effective way of reducing costs of production and effectively meeting foreign competition, 'the well-being of the country being primarily bound up with the prosperity of industry'. You will assure the leaders of the tenants' associations that rents will be immediately lowered, 'because the well-being of the country is primarily bound up with comfortable and contented home life'. At the same time you will inform the leaders of the landlords' associations that rents will be immediately increased 'because the well-being of the country is primarily bound up with a healthy and profitable housing industry'. You will secretly promise importers that tariffs will immediately be lowered 'because the well-being of the country depends on

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freedom of trade', while at the same time you will assure home producers of the same goods that imports will be prohibited, 'because the well-being of the country is primarily bound up with autarchy and economic independence'. The trusts . . .

PROFESSOR PICKUP Spare us the rest, and tell us how all these contradictory promises can afterwards be reconciled.

THOMAS THE CYNIC That does not concern us at the moment. The only thing of importance to Mr. W. in the situation we are discussing is the conquest of power. When we meet again and deal with the mysteries of dictatorship we shall see how easy it is to forget these promises. If any interested person has the audacity to remind you of one of them you have only to clap him in prison or have him deported as a traitor, 'because the well-being of the country is primarily bound up with the authority of the state'. But please, professor, don't force me to anticipate. I was going to say that on the eve of the *coup d'état* the aspiring dictator must appear to every section of the population, but particularly the richest sections, to be their particular friend. Even a careful reading of the chronicle of events immediately preceding the final triumph of the Fascists in Italy and Germany will reveal few traces of the intensity with which Mussolini's and Hitler's agents devoted themselves to the task of conquering 'the real country's' last doubts and dividing it from the old government. The success of these negotiations, which took place secretly while public attention was focused on the vain and noisy discussions taking place in Parliament, guaranteed the success of the *coup d'état*. Not many details are known about them yet, but there is no reason to suppose they were in the least complicated or difficult. Outside their own business, few men are so naive, infantile, gullible, and, I might almost say, stupid as the leaders of finance, industry, and commerce. They rarely intervene personally in party controversies, and talkative and thieving members of the petty-



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bourgeoisie are generally their go-betweens with the real political world. Apart from that, the loyalty of the big capitalists to democracy has never been sincere. Their businesses have never been run democratically! But what disturbs them most about democracy, and keeps them in a continual state of suspicion and alarm, is eloquence. They never know when they have to take it seriously. Stammerers always hate an orator. Besides, parliamentary institutions require too many intermediaries, who are expensive. But even when these psychological observations do not apply, the Fascist leader always has the fascination of 'the man of to-morrow' in capitalist eyes. They gamble on him, as on the next cotton crop, and if the situation changes he can be disowned. As long as it is uncertain which way things are going, the most prudent, those who are used to playing the market, back Fascism, but discreetly maintain their contacts with the democratic party; send their wives to church 'to bear witness to the family's faith in the religion of their fathers', but do not entirely disapprove of their son's getting mixed up with Communism, 'because, after all, they have to pass through a natural phase of youthful idealism'. The infiltration of Fascism into the social circles nearest the Government ends by putting the latter into a state of panic. As soon as the prospects of saving democracy look hopeless, every little democratic group tries to save at least itself, abandoning its friends. At this point, Mr. W., it will be necessary for you to devote yourself to a series of political manoeuvres for the purpose of dividing your surviving opponents, demoralizing them, discrediting them, and rendering them ridiculous and harmless. It is easily done. Offers of collaboration will pour in from every side, and all sorts of coalitions, plans for nationwide reforms, suggestions for pacts between rival but not hostile groups, committees of public safety presided over by neutral personalities, will be devised and presented to you. You will pretend to consider every proposition seriously and criticize it

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only in detail, and when a plan is modified in accordance with your suggestions you will declare that the situation has changed in the meantime, or make some other excuse. In every group opposed to you there will arise the illusion that when the imminent and inevitable *coup d'état* takes place it and it alone will be exempted from the clean sweep of the existing political personnel. Old and respected democratic leaders will publicly denounce 'all opposition to Fascism', and praise it for its 'dynamic youth'. No one, Mr. W., will dare any longer to contest your right to power. The only subject of discussion will be the date and the method and the identity of your collaborators. Most people will regard the hostility of the anti-Fascists as nothing but unpatriotic sectarianism. The democratic leaders will accustom public opinion to the idea of Fascist participation in the government of the country. Nevertheless you will decline every concrete proposal, not wishing to compromise your ambitious future for the sake of the usual vulgar mess of pottage.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Very well. But there is still an abyss between the situation you have described and the setting up of a personal dictatorship.

THOMAS THE GYNIC Not an abyss, but a small step to be taken in the dark. If an exceptional government is to be accepted, an exceptional state of affairs must be created to justify it. That is an infallible rule. Your task, therefore, Mr. W., will be to create a sudden peril, such as will fill the heart of every decent American citizen with horror and indignation. With equal swiftness and suddenness you must frustrate the dastardly attempt, thus earning the undying gratitude of every decent American citizen. And as soon as public opinion shows any sign of wearying of your exceptional government, and you detect even the vaguest symptoms of a desire to return to democratic liberties, you must re-create the peril, or invent an even more terrible one.

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MR. W. What peril would you advise me to use for the purpose, Mr. Cynic?

THOMAS THE CYNIC Generally speaking, the most effective is that which reveals 'the hidden hand', the irreconcilable enemy of property, religion and morality, acting in league with 'the alien hand' of the country's traditional enemy.

PROFESSOR PICKUP You forget that we have no real Communist peril in America.

THOMAS THE CYNIC All the better. A well-organized and well-staged artificial Communist plot has all the advantages and none of the disadvantages of a real one. Besides, in Italy in 1922 and in Germany in March 1933, there was no danger of a Communist rising either. But Mussolini and Hitler created and exploited one, and they have since re-created and re-exploited it whenever it suited them. 'The salvation of the country from an imminent danger' is such an important item in the technique of every dictatorship that it would be unpardonable frivolity on my part if I did not describe it in full. A single example from history will suffice. Napoleon had the hall of the Council of Five Hundred occupied by his troops and had himself named Consul 'to liberate the majority from a handful of traitors in the service of England'. To transfer the councillors from Paris to Saint-Cloud and facilitate his *coup d'état* it was, however, necessary to show that the republic was in danger. This task was left to President Sieyès, who informed the police of a mysterious Jacobin plot. From President Sieyès to Goering and from Fouché to General De Bono is but a step. The way in which these old tricks, a hundred times unmasked, invariably succeed in deceiving public opinion makes one despair of human intelligence. In July 1921, in a dispute with the extremists of his party, Mussolini stated that in Italy the Communist peril no longer existed. 'To maintain that a Bolshevik peril still exists in Italy betrays a false vision of reality,' he wrote. 'Bolshevism is conquered!' A year and a half later

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he revived the spectre of Bolshevism to justify his first exceptional laws. The whole central committee of the Communist Party was arrested after the discovery of many documents, the most mysterious of which was a Communist periodical, which was legally printed and distributed in various languages. One must, however, grant that the Germans organized the whole thing systematically, leaving nothing to chance. Hitler's *coup d'état* was conceived and carried out with the cold and calculated precision characteristic of the Prussian war machine. 'The Communist plot' was made the keystone of the arch of the strategic plan. In Roehm's *Memoirs* the underlying principle was revealed in advance. Discussing the military action to be taken by the Brownshirts in the event of a forcible seizure of power, he wrote:

This action must be disguised by the propaganda department of the party as a tremendous victory over the Communists and the Reichsbanner.

This advice was taken as soon as Hitler felt that the political situation was ripe. This is confirmed by Goebbels in a scarcely veiled passage in his book, *Vom Kaiserhof zur Reichskanzlei*, where he describes the decisive meetings held at the end of January 1933.

Our new measures were discussed in a short, practical conference — he wrote. — In a conversation with the Führer we settled our plans for the struggle against the Red Terror. We are to abstain temporarily from direct counter-measures. The Bolshevik attempt at revolution must flare up first. Then at the right moment we shall strike.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Oh, so you don't believe that in February 1933, the Berlin police discovered quantities of subversive material in the Karl Liebknecht House, proving that the Communists were preparing a revolt for the following day?

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THOMAS THE CYNIC Several years have passed since then, and the proofs have never been published, and no German court has yet examined them. In any case, publication would serve no useful purpose, since the material in question consisted of nothing but books, pamphlets and papers which were already familiar to the public, and not in Germany alone. Their contents were identical with that of the Communist Press of other countries. In other words, Mr. W., there are already in the Communist bookshops of America to-day tons of printed matter only waiting to be 'discovered' by the Fascist police when the right moment comes for you to denounce 'the imminent danger of a Communist revolt'.

PROFESSOR PICKUP H'm. Suppose opponents demand publication of the proofs?

THOMAS THE CYNIC In deference to the American democratic tradition, I advise Mr. W. to be bolder than his German colleague. The quantity of material at his disposal will obviously exempt him from the necessity of publishing it in full. He will therefore confine himself to selecting every sentence in which the word 'revolution' occurs. He will find an *embarras de richesses*. There is no Communist publication in which the terrible word 'revolution' does not occur at least ten times on every page. But even if that were not so, there is no difficulty in making a book say the most incredible and unexpected things, simply by selecting phrases here and there and skilfully stringing them together. Even the Bible would not survive such treatment. And just imagine what could be done with a Communist book! Professor, you perhaps remember the celebrated phrase: 'Give me a single sentence out of a book, and I will hang the author.' It will be Mr. W.'s business to do likewise and hang democracy. But it is useless to discover a plot unless you exploit it immediately, within the next few hours. Not only must you have clarity of purpose, but you must act swiftly and boldly. You must not lose a

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moment in taking advantage of your enemies' surprise. It will depend on circumstances whether you use 'the discovery of the plot' to precipitate the seizure of power or to transform into a personal dictatorship the government of public security which you may have entered, pretending to be resigned to collaboration with other parties. But two important precautions must not be overlooked. The 'discovery of the plot' must take place in or near the capital, and the police, of course, must be already in the Fascist Party's hands. Also, the revelation of a 'Communist plot' may not always be sufficient by itself. Its effectiveness may be usefully enhanced by demonstrating not only that it exists but that it is actually being carried out; and some monstrous outrage, such as would horrify every decent citizen, must therefore be attributed to 'the hidden hand' to produce a pogrom atmosphere and cause a universal demand for a ruthless dictator to save the country and put down the menace with an iron fist.

PROFESSOR PICKUP I already know the incident you will quote as an example.

THOMAS THE CYNIC No, professor. You are thinking of the Reichstag Fire, but that is not an example to imitate. The idea was sound but the execution was in many ways defective. Let me warn you against committing the same mistakes, Mr. W. It is certainly correct to involve a foreign Communist, preferably a Slav, or at least a man with red hair, in the outrage, to show 'the alien hand'. But avoid using a real Communist, hardened by emigration and police persecution. In the case of a fire it is impossible to avoid sending for the fire brigade; but prevent them from making inconvenient discoveries about the fire's origin. There is no guarantee that the individuals who actually perform the outrage will not tell their friends the truth about it. But it should not be difficult to cause them to disappear from circulation immediately after the outrage. If a trial cannot be avoided, it must at least be entrusted to a special

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tribunal capable of 'liquidating' in advance such witnesses and accused as are not sufficiently docile. Moreover, the tribunal must be capable of making the proceedings in court as instructive and edifying as a public meeting called for the purpose of denouncing the heinous activities of 'the hidden' and 'the alien hand'. The Moscow Trials will serve you as perfect examples of the administration of justice in the service of propaganda. All these warnings, Mr. W., are not intended to discourage you. They only refer to details. The vital thing is to seize power immediately, while the whole country is still gasping with horror at the news of the outrage. The memory of that decisive moment gives an epic touch to all the chroniclers of National-Socialism. Goebbels, in the diary I have already quoted, notes: 'Now the decisive moment has come. Goering is in full blast!' 'Now we go forward to victory.' 'Once more it is a pleasure to be alive!' Hitler, on arriving on the scene of the fire, turned to his companion, Von Papen, and said: 'This is a God-given sign. No one will prevent us now from crushing the Communists with an iron hand!'

MR. W. What do you advise me to do in practice?

THOMAS THE CYNIC The choice of the building to be burned down or wrecked by the alleged 'Communists' must be governed solely by one's knowledge of the masses' sensibilities, which must be severely shocked. Sometimes the masses remain indifferent at the news of great massacres, but are profoundly shocked by a death sentence on an innocent man. It is therefore fallacious to believe that outrages involving the largest number of victims are necessarily the most impressive. Many supporters of the Paris Commune, who defended and justified the most energetic measures taken by that exceptional government, could not swallow the Communards' attempts to destroy the Vendôme Column. Victor Hugo, who as a poet shared all the sentimental weaknesses of the people, described that superfluous but harmless action as 'a crime against the nation'

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and continued bitterly to reproach the Communards for it even after their bloody defeat.

MR. W. Supposing I caused 'Communists' to rifle the tomb of the Unknown Soldier? And supposing I reserved myself the honour of finding the remains in a cave in the Alleghanies? Or what if I arranged a 'Communist' outrage against the Statue of Liberty, at the entrance to New York harbour, which, between ourselves, has always got on my nerves?

THOMAS THE CYNIC Both ideas seem worthy of consideration. The first would have the advantage of camouflaging the March to Washington as an immense funeral procession, accompanying the ashes of the Unknown Soldier back to his official tomb. The second would provide the opportunity of causing the suppression of democratic liberty to coincide with the restoration of the Statue of Liberty. It might also suggest a good title, such as 'Mr. W., Restorer of Liberty', to adorn your portrait on the new paper money and postage stamps.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Before discussing the typographical alterations to be made in postage stamps, I think we had better conclude our discussion of the *coup d'état*. Experience shows that the political manoeuvres which you have just described are not always sufficient, Mr. Cynic, and that in order to attain power you have to march the Fascist legions on the capital and face the forces remaining loyal to the government.

THOMAS THE CYNIC The final act of the Fascist *coup d'état* is always a military procession. But its only function is to intimidate such opponents as still survive, as well as the constitutional authorities. It has no warlike function. It is, in short, a demonstration of force the purpose of which is to render the employment of force unnecessary. Various authors have tried to differentiate Hitler's *coup d'état* from Mussolini's on the ground that in Italy the procession took place before the Fascist leader was invited to form a government, while in Germany the procession took place afterwards. But this view is incorrect.



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The Blackshirts only entered and marched through Rome after Mussolini had been received by the King and invited to form a government. If in Italy it was necessary, in order to intimidate the democratic government, to mobilize the Blackshirts and stage a March to Rome in advance, one must bear in mind that Mussolini was faced with the problem of seizing power barely two years after the foundation of the *fasci*, while Hitler reached it after twelve years, when the demoralization of his opponents was far more advanced and the Brownshirts were already recognized as an auxiliary police force by the 'democratic' regime. In both cases, however, the change of government proceeded nominally on legal lines.

PROFESSOR PICKUP In Spain, in July 1936 . . .

THOMAS THE CYNIC . . . there was no *coup d'état* by a political party, professor, but a military insurrection in conjunction with foreign intervention in Spanish politics.

MR. W. I must say that the Spanish case seems irrelevant to me too. That is a war, not a revolution. All the same, who can guarantee that in other countries the Fascist *coup* will pass off as smoothly as it did in Italy and Germany?

THOMAS THE CYNIC That is true. The unexpected may always happen. Mussolini, knowing this, hesitated to the last, and even when he made up his mind to have recourse to the threat of arms, he did not neglect to take the necessary precautions in case of failure. He did not plan the March to Rome as an unconstitutional movement. Italo Balbo has described in his *Diary* the meeting of the leaders of the Fascist movement that took place on October 16th, 1922, when the March to Rome was decided on. The aim of the enterprise was declared to be 'to force the Government to resign and urge the Crown to form a Fascist ministry'. Thus the illegal aspect of the operation was reduced to a minimum. Mussolini asked those present if they thought the military forces of the Fascists were sufficient to march to Rome. Generals De Bono and De Vecchi replied that

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they were not, and nobody attempted to contradict them. If the March to Rome was decided on nevertheless, it was for serious political reasons. 'If we do not attempt a *coup d'état* immediately', Balbo declared, 'in the spring it will be too late.' There was, in fact, no time to lose. It was only by gaining possession of the state that Fascism could hold its followers and the masses. The Nazis acted in similar circumstances. If one carefully examines the successful *coups d'état* of recent decades, they all seem to have been carried out at the top of a parabola, just when the Fascist Party, having reached its maximum strength, seemed to be hesitating about what to do next and its fortunes appeared to be trembling in the balance. Then it suddenly detected the signs of an approaching change in the situation, and found itself forced to make a hurried decision. One may say that such decisive moments occur in the life of every party, and that the true politician reveals himself by the speed with which he recognizes them, and by the coolness with which he adapts himself to their requirements. Mussolini's hesitations derived from uncertainty about the attitude of the king, which would determine that of the general staff. When the guarantees given by Mussolini that the constitutional forms of the state would be respected still seemed insufficient, General Badoglio declared: 'Five minutes of fire and Fascism will collapse'. This was no exaggeration. Mussolini was the first to be convinced of it.

We do not believe that General Badoglio's gloomy expectations will be fulfilled — he wrote in his journal. — The national army will not march against the army of the Blackshirts, for the simple reason that the Fascists will never march against the national army, for whom they have the highest respect and an infinite admiration.

Everything was done to gain the King's sympathy for the Fascist cause, and the results were encouraging. On October 24th, according to the instructions worked out at Naples for the

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March that was to begin four days later, it was arranged that 'in the event of armed resistance on the part of the Government, everything possible is to be done to avoid clashes with the troops, towards whom feelings of sympathy and respect are to be manifested'. Certain regiments were under the command of Fascist officers, but it was decided not to make use of them, in order not to provoke counter-measures on the part of any officers loyal to the Government. For Fascism to conquer in an unarmed country it was sufficient for the army to remain neutral. To provide against any eventuality, Mussolini appointed a secret military committee, of which, not knowing which way the cat was going to jump, he prudently refrained from becoming a member himself. This committee directed operations from Perugia, while Mussolini himself remained in Milan, an hour and a half from the Swiss frontier.

MR. W. It would be difficult to carry out a secret plot in America, not because of the police but because of the reporters.

THOMAS THE GYNIC The secret of the March to Rome was like the secret of Pulcinella, written on the city walls. Besides, it is impossible to set masses in motion and keep it secret. Even in serious insurrectionary movements, the element of surprise is nowadays reduced to a minimum. An insurrection succeeds when it is expected by the majority of the people, and regarded by them as necessary and inevitable. Only the technical details of the movement can and must be kept a secret. Mussolini did not even trouble to do that, and a few weeks before the March to Rome revealed the geographical and strategic details in his paper. The idea of the March was in the air, and everyone was talking about it.

It is not possible, when you are about to make an assault upon the state, to confine yourself to a little conspiracy which remains more or less secret up to the last moment — Mussolini wrote at the end of September. — We have to

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give orders to hundreds of thousands of persons, and it would be presumptuous and absurd to hope to keep it secret.

May I read you what Karl Marx wrote about Louis Bonaparte's *coup d'état*?

A *coup d'état* was always Bonaparte's fixed idea. It was with this idea in his head that he crossed the French frontier. It preoccupied him so much that he continually betrayed it and chattered about it. He was so weak that he just as continually gave it up. The spectre of a *coup d'état* had grown so familiar to the people of Paris that they were disinclined to believe in it when it finally appeared in flesh and blood. Thus it was neither the careful restraint of the leader of the Society of the Tenth of December nor a surprise assault on the part of the National Assembly that permitted the *coup d'état* to succeed. If it succeeded, it succeeded in spite of *his* indiscretion and with *their* foreknowledge, as a necessary and inevitable result of the previous development.

PROFESSOR PICKUP At Rome we were shown a film of the Fascist legionaries' March to Rome. We found it very impressive indeed.

THOMAS THE CYNIC And you, an American, believe what you see at the cinema? The reality was much more modest. The Fascist military plan developed in three directions; in the industrial cities, Turin, Milan, Genoa and Trieste, and in southern Italy, the Fascist bands remained on the defensive; in Central Italy and throughout the Valley of the Po they seized the local power, not only without encountering any resistance, but actually with the assistance of the military authorities and the police. From the latter region three columns were sent to camp at a certain distance from Rome. They numbered about forty thousand men, of whom only a few were armed with rifles or revolvers. They had no guns, machine-guns or

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aeroplanes. What was worse, they had no tents or provisions. A few bombers would have been sufficient to decimate them and put them to flight. However, the greatest inconvenience those heroic soldiers had to face was rain. The few messages that passed between the commanders of the three columns (they were published later) spoke of nothing but rain. One of the commanders, Iglioni, wrote to his nearest colleague, Bottai, that as the rain made it impossible for him to remain in the open country, he felt obliged to enter Rome to shelter his men from the downpour. Bottai, who was under cover, advised him to be patient and not to disturb the political negotiations in progress between the King and the Fascist representatives by a premature entry into the city. On October 30th Mussolini was sent for by the King and travelled from Milan to Rome in a *sleeping-car*. *The same evening the Fascist marchers who were wettest were given permission to enter the outskirts of Rome to restore their dampened spirits and dry their clothes.* Next day, news of Mussolini's appointment as Prime Minister having spread throughout the country, Fascist bands, even from the most distant provinces, started scurrying towards the capital to march past before the King, the Duce and the cinematograph operators. The tokens of democracy collapsed like a house of cards.

PROFESSOR PICKUP Reality is always prosaic. There are events that only reveal their nobility when looked at from a distance of centuries. How was the capture of Jericho by Joshua regarded by the military critics of his time? Certainly not in a flattering manner. But it has come down to us as a miracle. Seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns compassed the city seven times and blew with the trumpets, and Joshua said unto the people, Shout, for the Lord hath given you the city; and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city,

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every man straight before him, and they took the city; and only Rahab the harlot was spared, because she had sheltered Joshua's messengers.

THOMAS THE CYNIC In the Fascist *coup d'état* the part of Rahab the harlot was played by Parliament.

MR. W. The time has come, my dear Mr. Cynic, for us to part. I have to hurry back to the States. I regret it will not be possible to resume our conversations immediately, and proceed from the Fascist conquest of power to the problems of the Fascist State itself. Nevertheless, I hope we shall have an opportunity at some later date. In America, perhaps?



